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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

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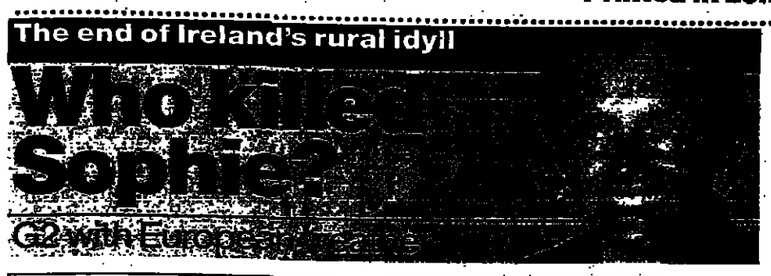
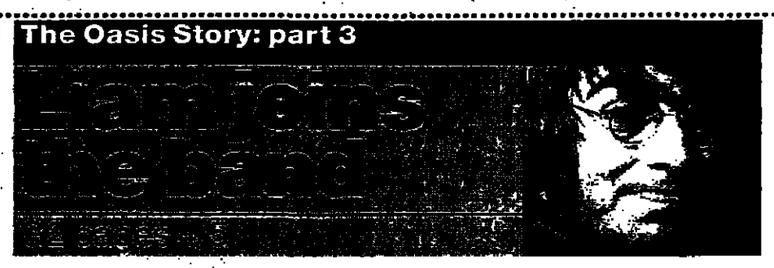
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

46,754

The end of Ireland's rural idyll



The Oasis Story: part 3



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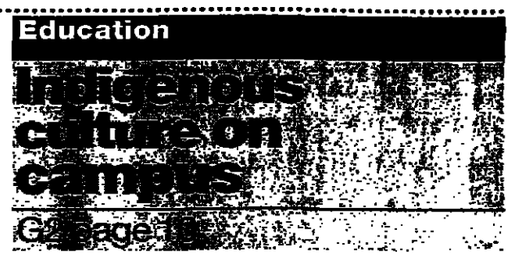


Blair swings right on crime

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

LABOUR leader Tony Blair yesterday came out for the first time in support of the New York idea of "zero-tolerance" of crime, in which the police clamp down hard on even the most minor infringements.

Mr Blair's hardening stance on law and order helps the party to outflank the rightwing policies of Michael Howard, the Home Secretary.

It deflected attention from the opening day of the most expensive advertising campaign in the Conservatives' history and what may go down as the opening day of the election campaign.

Mr Blair raised the crime issue in an interview in this week's edition of the Big Issue, the magazine which helps the homeless earn money.

Asked if he agreed with zero tolerance, Mr Blair said: "Yes. I do. It is important that you say we don't tolerate the small crimes. It says you don't tolerate the graffiti on the wall."

He continued: "Obviously some people will interpret this in a way which is harsh and unpleasant, but I think the basic principle here is to say: yes, it is right to be intolerant on people homeless on the streets. But the way to deal with that is you make sure that when those people come off the streets you're doing the other part of the equation."

The shift towards zero tolerance is the culmination of a long drift rightwards by Labour on law and order, begun by Mr Blair himself as shadow home secretary and continued by Jack Straw, who has angered leftwingers with policies and comments intended to end Labour's image as soft on crime.

An experiment on zero tolerance is being carried out a present in London's King's Cross area, which has a high proportion of prostitutes, beggars and petty criminals. As in New York, the police crack down on them all, even on graffiti-writers.

Accused by the interviewer of adopting a 19th century approach by arresting beggars, Mr Blair said: "Of course, unless they're doing something that is problematic for other people. I often drop my kids off in the morning at King's Cross for them to take the Tube and it's actually quite a frightening place. I'm saying we do have to make our streets safe for people."

He went on: "If you've got an old lady on a council estate who gets her door battered down and she's mugged by a gang of youths, it's not enough to say 'Wait until there's a decent society.'. She wants something down to be protected. And she wants those people to be caught and to be punished. That, I'm afraid, is just the only way the world can work."

In a comment that is likely to provoke a debate on how to deal with beggars, he admitted that he did not give money to beggars but instead gave to charities.

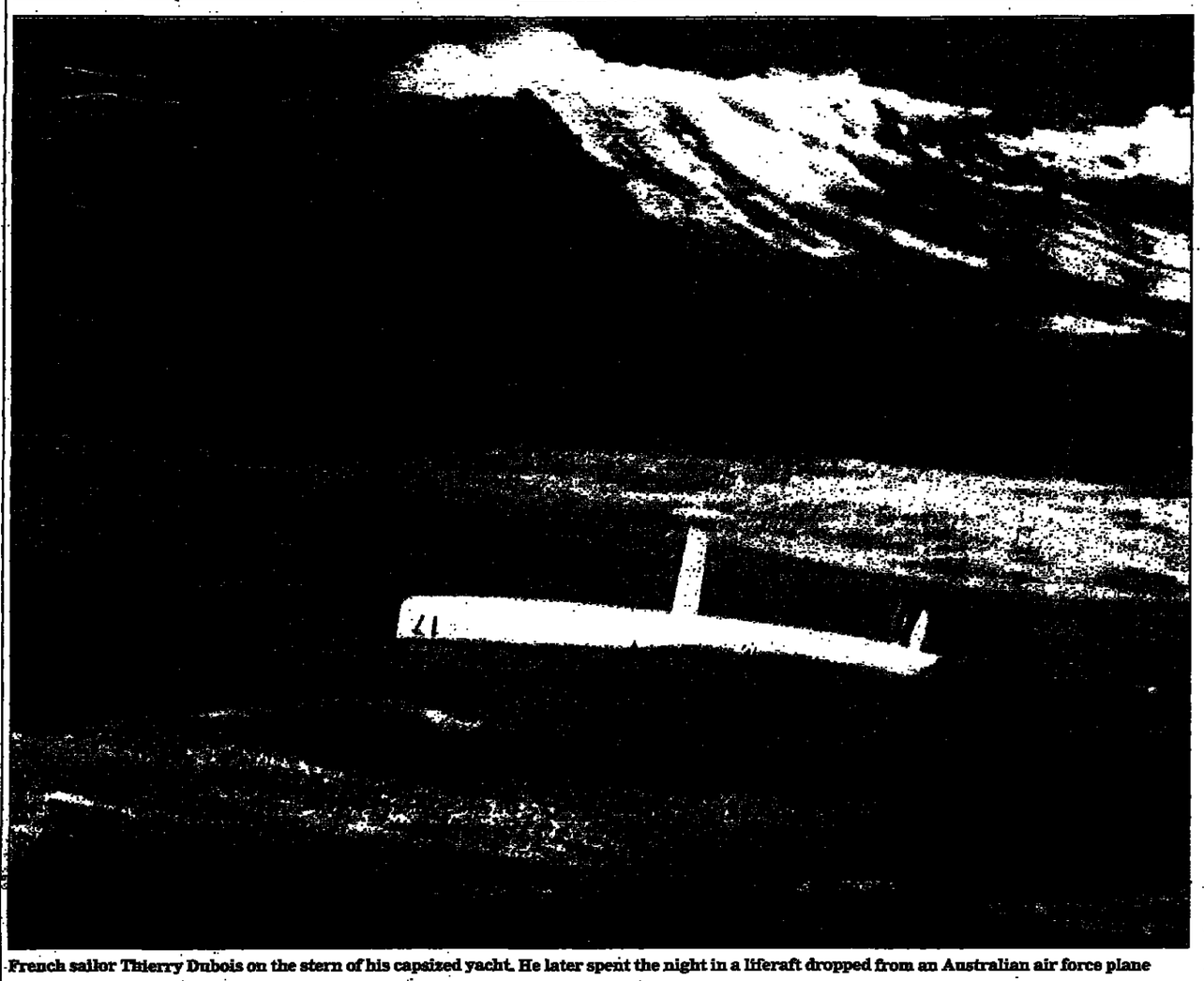
"I do buy the Big Issue occasionally but I don't put that in the same category. I don't want to make a big thing of it, but I make certain donations to charity."

Mr Blair's office said the reason he did not give to beggars was not that that he was unsympathetic but that he thought there were better ways of dealing the problem other than spending money indiscriminately.

In New York, the zero tolerance policy is being hailed as the major reason for a drop in the city's murder rate last year to below 1,000 for the first time in nearly 30 years — a fall in violent crime that has transformed the city from a byword for urban terror into one of America's safest cities.

New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani insists the fall in the murder rate is the result of zero tolerance policing under which officers have been ordered to crack down on any crime, however minor.

Round-the-world yachtsmen capsize in high seas



French sailor Thierry Dubois on the stern of his capsized yacht. He later spent the night in a liferaft dropped from an Australian air force plane

Missing: British sailor *Tony Bullimore*

'It is an area feared by every seaman. You can get waves up to 120 feet; they go round the world without interruption. It is very cold, desolate and empty.'

Yachtsman Robin Knox-Johnston

Yacht alarm gives hope for lone sailor

Christopher Zinn in Sydney, Bob Fisher and Lawrence Donegan

RESCUERS searching for a British yachtsman whose boat overturned in the Southern Ocean said last night they were almost certain he was alive after they picked up a fresh distress signal from his boat.

Tony Bullimore, one of Britain's most experienced transatlantic sailors, was feared dead after his 60-foot yacht Global Exide Challenger capsized in high seas off the south-west coast of Australia.

But Mahesh Alimchandani, of the Maritime Rescue Centre in Canberra, which is co-ordinating the rescue operation, said hopes for his safety had increased significantly after a beacon on his yacht was activated in an "alarm mode".

"Prior to all this, the beacon was activated in what is called a normal mode, which immediately suggests that there is someone there who has swapped the switch — probably as an indication that 'Hey, I'm here, and don't write me off'. So we're pretty certain he's alive," he said.

Mr Bullimore, aged 56, a former yachtsman of the year, had been feared dead when his boat overturned in high winds and 20ft waves. It was sighted, minus its keel, in an area of notoriously high seas 1,500 miles off the west coast of Australia.

He had been taking part in the Vendee Globe, a single-handed, non-stop race around the world which began in France in November, with the yachts heading south around Africa and toward Australia.

The race organisers pledged to send a third plane by first light tomorrow morning, the third day of the search for the Bristol-based yachtsman.

Mr Bullimore's wife, Lalel, said yesterday she had spoken to him last Friday. "We spoke by radio phone. He was absolutely fine. Everything was going well and he told me not to worry. I knew the conditions were rough but he is a very experienced and a very tough guy. If anyone can get through this I know he will."

Meanwhile, Mr Bullimore's fellow competitor in the race, Frenchman Thierry Dubois, spent last night in a liferaft after his yacht Amnesty International capsized fewer than 50 miles away from the spot where the Briton ran into trouble.

The 29-year-old yachts-

turn to page 2, column 2

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Top-floor charlies too bubbly for co-op flats

Oxo Wharf Tower: Trouble upstairs and downstairs

James Meikle, Community Affairs Editor

UPSTAIRS, they swigged champagne at up to £85 a bottle, with cheaper bubbly at £7 a glass.

Downstairs, Alan Strong swigged toilet cleaner and tablets, exhausted by the noise of late-night revellers and then the cleaners.

On the eighth and top floor of the revamped Oxo Tower on London's South Bank resides Harvey Nicks, whose bar, restaurant and brasserie offer stunning views and evening meals at around £40 a head without wine.

On floor seven and below are 78 flats, half of whose tenants are nominated by councils. Their rents, ranging from £65 to £110, are often cheaper than dinner for two upstairs.

Residents say they have been plagued by problems since the business opened in September. Allegations include groups leaving early in the morning "playing tag" or noisily hailing limousines and taxis, cleaners dragging tables, and food and drink clanking in the service lift.

Some tenants in the flats leased by a housing co-operative have started legal action with a view to prosecuting Harvey Nichols Restaurants or Coin Street Community Builders, which runs the site.

Mr Strong, aged 32, lives below the brasserie bar. Last month, he said, he took a mixture of toilet cleaning fluid and tablets. Now, says Mr Strong, Southwark council has agreed to rehouse him.

"I hadn't slept for three months and was losing weight. I was rehoused here to get some rest. It has been a farce from start to finish."

The Oxo Wharf Tower, once a meat-processing warehouse, is the linchpin of a wider regeneration project run by Coin Street Community Builders, which sought through its housing arm to involve communities in the rebirth of the area.

Louise King, spokeswoman for Coin Street, said: "We are looking into the problems they say they are experiencing."

Harvey Nichols said it took the issue of noise "extremely seriously," and there had been two meetings with residents. Signs requested visitors to leave quietly, times and methods of cleaning had been changed and all cleaners had to wear rubber-soled shoes.

But Mr Strong remembers the day "a woman in a fur coat, who had been there for lunch presumably, came out of the building, looked up at the flats and shouted 'Look at those, all that money spent and they are all on the dole' ".

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Sketch

Walking man need never walk alone

David Ward

HE LOOKS like a perambulating cross between a car boot sale and an Oxfam shop: thick shirt, friendly old sweater, lurid mauve (mauve?) fleece, tartan scarf, waterproof jacket, rucksack and headphones.

Headphones? This rambler has a tape machine concealed beneath the left armpit. It does not play Alma Cogan's Hiking Hits nor the Essential Walking Classics, but the Walkfree AudioGuide to a walk in the Peak District. A five-mile circuit from Bakewell (2½ hours, no sweat).

After failing to find the right car park (the accompanying booklet is a little opaque on such details), it is time to switch on. "Welcome to Walkfree!" cries a hearty breeches-and-long-woolly-socks voice. "So you want a relaxing country walk? To be entertained, to enjoy good company — or even just your own good company? Indeed, with an AudioGuide [hint of a giggle here], you need never walk alone."

Fortunately, Hearty Voice soon hands over to the real guide, Pete Hawkins, who gently explains that the Monsal Trail, where the walk begins, was formed from the railway line that linked London with the North-west before closing in 1968.

The rambler heads south towards St Pancras, realises his mistake and turns north to Manchester. Our Pete enthuses about brick cottages, a barn combining limestone and gritstone, geological happenings 350 million years ago. But he cannot conceal the fact that railway lines make boring trails.

Dissatisfied, the walker's mind wanders to the practicalities of using an AudioGuide in a flurry of sleet. Stop. Remove gloves and woolly hat and stuff under arm. Fix headphones on ears. Unzip fleece, reach for play button. Listen. Reach for stop button. Zip up fleece. Take off headphones. Replace hat and gloves. Blow nose. Walk on.

Try fixing phones over hat at next stop. Can't hear Pete. Try asking him why he didn't just write all this stuff down. Doesn't listen, keeps talking. Tell him wittily that AudioGuide falls between two stiles. Still doesn't listen. Goes on about fossils in limestone walls.

Meet passing retriever and hungry sheep with eyes on ham sandwiches in rucksack. Walk leaves Monsal Trail and rapidly improves. Landscape turns sepia rather than monochrome in tired snow. Wave at kids on sledges in fields in Little Longstone and head for Monsal Head, with grand view over the river Wye.

"Oh what have we got here then?" asks Pete, who brings in his friend the fishmerman to explain why trout like these waters. Pete himself deals with geology, and industrial and landscape history.

"Very interesting," approves Alfred Russell. He listens to Pete after removing earpieces through which he has been listening to an Abba tape rather than an AudioGuide. Alfred is out for a quick 10-miler. He lives up the road and needs no guide or map.

Doreen and John Pearson, out for the day from Chesterfield, are mapless too. "We've been stuck in all over Christmas and New Year," says Mrs Pearson. "Now I'm out, I'm really enjoying it."

Mr Pearson would not use an AudioGuide round here but might consider one in Scotland, where paths were not familiar.

The walk ambles over the fields to Ashford (note the nice houses built on money made in lead mining, says Pete) and then follows the Wye, ending with a final dreary stretch along the poisonous A6 to Bakewell.

The last bit is uphill. The puffing rambler concludes that there are better walks in the Peak District and that the AudioGuide package is expensive: two walks for £9.99; that's 83p per mile. The five miles have taken almost 3½ hours. Unheard by the silent Pete, the rambler tells himself that next time he will reach for the fast forward button.

Review

Nice band, shame about the venue

Andrew Clements

Park Lane Group Young Artists
Purcell Room, London

A FEATURED living composer, generally from the more conservative wing of British music, a clutch of premieres and a super-abundance of young talent: the ingredients for the annual Park Lane Group Young Artists Concerts have not changed very much in 40 years. The season of programmes at this time gets good exposure because so little else is happening in London's concert halls.

At least the PLG series offers some spark of life, though its viability has been maintained over four decades much more by the continuing excellence of the singers and instrumentalists it showcases than by any semblance of flair or imagination put into the packaging of the event.

Monitoring these concerts each year one meets the same faces, the core of the faithful contemporary-music audience, many of whom have been turning up every January since the year dot; there is no hint that the PLG has even considered making the concerts more attractive, less predictable. Complacency seems to rule, secure in the knowledge that young performers will always audition for the concerts because they offer a London appearance.

The importance of such a high-profile chance was demonstrated by the inclusion of the Brunel Ensemble, which gave the opening concert on Sunday. This Bristol-based group, run by its conductor Christopher Austin, already has an enterprising concert series in its home city.

The Purcell Room is hardly the best place to appreciate a band like the Brunel Ensemble, which regularly fields as many as 15 players. Anything above *forte* becomes aggressively uncomfortable, although closing the stage curtains behind the percussion section might have taken the raw edge off some of the fiercer textures. In such a space it was hard to tease out the polymetrical layers of Julian Anderson's Khovorod, with its virtuoso display of dance rhythms, or the artful colourings of its melodies.

The Brunel performance steadily gained in confidence and energy, although tiny lapses of ensemble blunted its clean-cut edges, just as they marred the first performance of John Woolrich's Music From The House of Crossed Desires, a neat instrumental compilation of material from his opera first seen last year and all the better for dispensing with the original libretto.

There were more suave accounts of the rather Baxian A Sea-Change by Anthony Payne, the featured composer this time, and of the anodyne Book Of Hours by Richard Rodney Bennett, and a tightly focused one of Elisabeth Lutyens's typically terse and gritty Six Bagatelles. The new work was Viscid, by Morgan Hayes, a 23-year-old pupil of Robert Saxton and Michael Finnissy — a great title and a promising work, unfolding tangled skeins of melody over dark block chords, though it ends rather too soon and never quite breaks out of its restrained sound world.

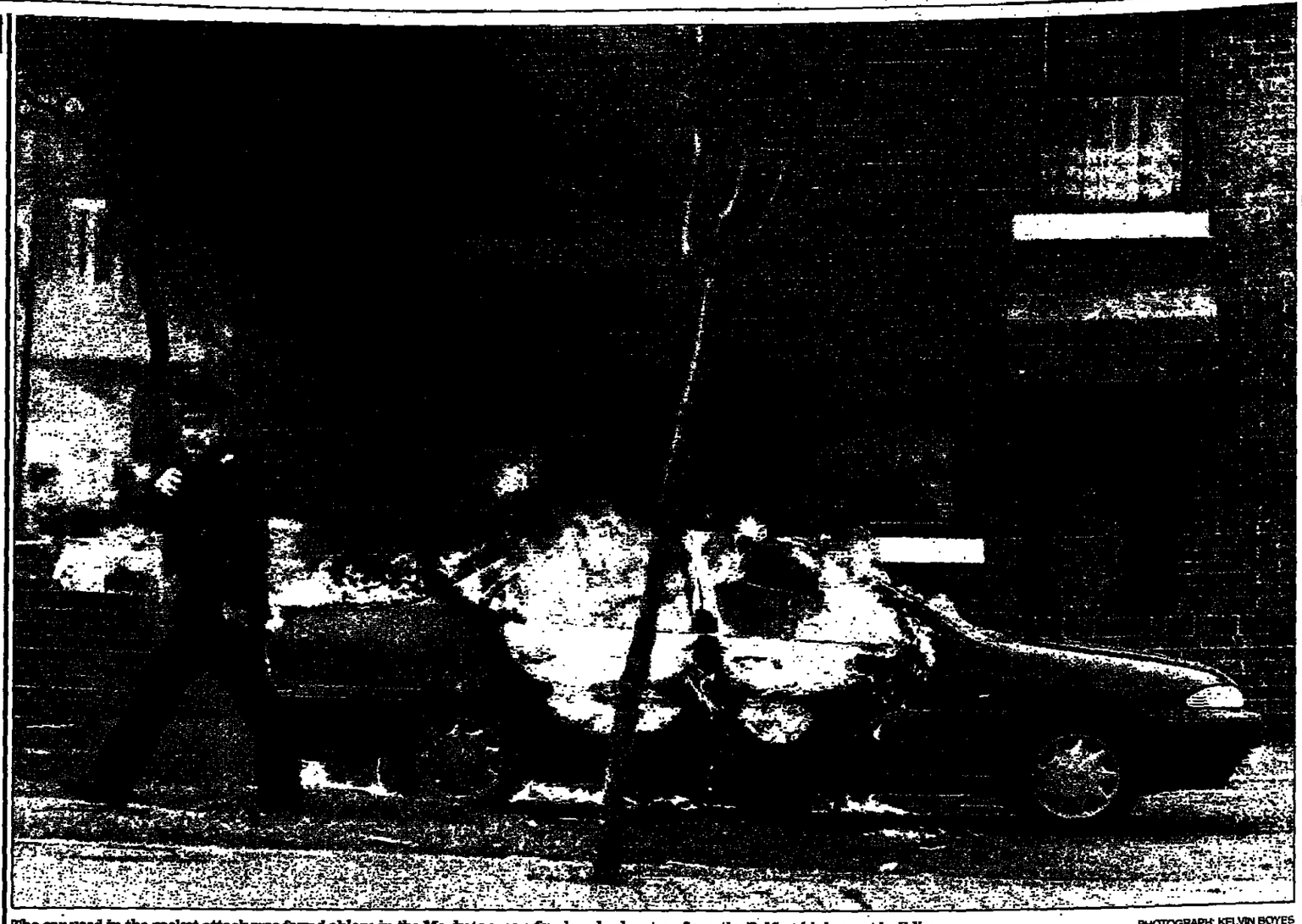
Classical music goes pop as crossover chart is unveiled

Stephen Moss

THE line between pop and classical music was redrawn yesterday with the unveiling of the first Classical Crossover Chart.

Compilations dominate, number one is Best Opera Album in the World ... Ever, followed by The Greatest Classical Movie Album, and The Number 1 Classicaly Album.

The listing was introduced by Chart Information Network after pressure from artists and record companies. The exclusion from the classical charts of Marianne Faithfull's collection of Kurt Weill songs last summer gave a fresh focus to demands for a crossover chart for pop artists covering the classics and classical stars heading downmarket.



The car used in the rocket attack was found ablaze in the Markets area a few hundred metres from the Belfast high court building

PHOTOGRAPH: KELVIN BOYES

IRA attack threatens truce

Fears grow after court is targeted

Vivek Chaudhary in Belfast

FEARS of an end to the loyalist paramilitaries' fragile ceasefire and a return to full-scale violence in Northern Ireland were growing last night after the IRA admitted responsibility for a rocket attack on the Northern Ireland High Court yesterday in which a policeman on guard duty was injured.

The IRA claimed it had also planted bombs in four hotels and Belfast's main railway station. But despite an extensive search and the closure of large sections of the city centre, no devices were found. Tension remained high in the city last night.

The attack on the High Court, for which the Belfast brigade of the IRA claimed responsibility, has increased fears that loyalist paramilitaries might end the ceasefire they declared two years ago, signalling a return to tit-for-tat killings and attacks.

Last weekend, loyalist paramilitary sources threatened to resume an all-out campaign if anyone was killed by an IRA attack in Northern Ireland.

Politicians in Northern Ireland yesterday claimed the IRA was attempting to shatter the peace process and launch a full-scale campaign of violence.

The deputy leader of the Rev Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, the East Belfast MP Peter Robinson, claimed the bombing was a deliberate attempt by the Provisionals to provoke the Protestant paramilitaries.

The West Belfast SDLP MP Joe Hendron said it was as if the IRA hoped the loyalists would hit back. "I think it's very significant, and certainly people are most apprehensive at this point in time. People are disgusted with what's happening, and this is certainly an extreme provocation."

Gary McMichael, leader of the Ulster Democratic Party which is closely linked to the paramilitary UDA and UFF, said the IRA was not interested in peace, but the loyalist paramilitaries' ceasefire would remain in place.

He added: "I have been speaking with the UFF and they have assured me that they remain committed to keeping the peace process alive. However, I think there is a feeling of despondency. The IRA appear to be intent on drawing all of the people of Northern Ireland into a conflict situation."

The Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, said the attack was a "regrettable" symptom of the problem all sides face. But he said he was hopeful that a peaceful settlement could still be found.

He said: "There is going to be a peace settlement ... There are different factors preventing that happening at this time. Those of us in political leadership must do our utmost to try and change the conditions to make sure there's no slippage backwards."

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, called yesterday's attack the work of "gangsters" and said he gave his full support to the RUC and the army.

The attack came at a time of renewed tension in Northern Ireland, with both loyalist and nationalist paramilitaries carrying out attacks over the Christmas and New Year period.

Last week, a 1,000lb IRA bomb was detected by security forces in the grounds of Belfast Castle. Just before Christmas, Eddie Copeland, a leading Republican, was injured when a booby-trap bomb went off under his car.

According to the RUC, yesterday's attack took place after two armed men hijacked a black Ford Mondeo car in the Markets area of Belfast, a predominantly nationalist neighbourhood. The car wove through midday traffic and slowed down outside the court, where the rocket was firing. The car was later found on fire in the Markets area.

A policeman on guard duty dived to the ground moments before the attack. He was taken to hospital suffering from minor injuries, shock and damage to his ear drums. A woman in the High Court collapsed with shock.

Chief Inspector Victor Hutchinson, deputy subdivisional commander at the Musgrave Street RUC station next to the High Court, described the attack as callous.

He said: "This area is very, very busy. The courts were in operation at the time and it was very busy in the street. There were other motorists passing by at the time, their lives were definitely put at grave risk."

Tory troubles: MP hints at withdrawal from whip — PR man promises personal vendetta against party

MP in reform row turns screw on Major

Michael White Political Editor

CONSERVATIVE MP Hugh Dykes last night refused to back down from his commitment to discuss constitutional reform with Labour and the Liberal Democrats — and threatened to escalate his dispute with the Government.

After the publication of letters between Mr Dykes and Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, created an embarrassing distraction from the launch of the latest campaign offensive against Labour, the MP for Harrow East signalled that he could follow his north London neighbour, Sir John Gorst, in refusing to abide by the Tory whip if his local casualty ward is not kept open.

Mr Dykes is seeking a fresh meeting with Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, to win assurances that a 24-hour, fully-staffed unit will remain at Edgware hospital after the main accident unit is merged with nearby Barnet.

The ardently pro-European Mr Dykes had already enraged loyalists by rejecting criticism of what turns out to be his seven-month discussions with Mr Straw over the need to find a consensus for constitutional reform in Britain — earlier dubbed "profoundly dangerous" by the prime minister.

In his letter to Mr Straw, accepting an invitation to give evidence before the Lib-Lab joint consultative committee Mr Dykes said he had "always felt strongly that certain matters of constitutional reform are so important for the future that they justify fully an all-party approach.

He said: "I would wish to concentrate on voting systems, including for the European Parliament; the European Convention of Human Rights and its relevance to UK law; and future reforms of the House of Lords."

Unsurprisingly, Tony Blair, Paddy Ashdown and their leading lieutenants welcomed the public statement. Mr Straw said Mr Dykes had already been very helpful.

Dr Mawhinney tried to play down the matter through gritted teeth. "The issue here is the UK. As the Prime Minister made clear yesterday we have a commitment to the UK. We are very sceptical of people who for their own political ends want to light a fuse which would blow the UK asunder," he said.

Hugh Dykes: exchange of letters with Jack Straw

The row overshadowed Dr Mawhinney's launch of his "It would all end in tears" campaign designed to warn voters against risking a Labour government.

The posters, unveiled in central London, show people from all sections of the community crying red tears. They bear the slogans New Labour New Taxes, New Labour New Job Losses, New Labour New Price Rises and New Labour New Mortgage Risk.

Dr Mawhinney denied the message was a negative one. "Tell me what is negative of reminding people that new jobs are being created, that unemployment is falling and taxes are going down, and all that will be put at risk by a Labour government," he said.

Clifford warns Tories of more sleaze exposés

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE publicity consultant Max Clifford yesterday pledged to rock the Tories with further sleaze revelations before the general election, in what he said was a personal vendetta.

Mr Clifford, who masterminded Sunday's News of the World story alleging a homosexual relationship between backbencher Jerry Hayes and Paul Stone, a former Tory researcher who would then have been under-age, said he was motivated by his anger over the Tories' destruction of the NHS. He has a disabled daughter suffering rheumatoid arthritis.

Mr Hayes, MP for Harlow in Essex and a 43-year-old married father of two, has denied having a sexual relationship with Mr Stone, who is represented by Mr Clifford in the £100,000-plus publicity deal.

Speaking after Mr Stone, now a trainee accountant aged 24, gave an interview on radio, Mr Clifford said he was working on "two or three major stories which, if they can be proved, will show the Conservative Party for what it really is".

Mr Clifford has made no secret of the fact that the story was timed to coincide with the Prime Minister's latest drive to put the family at the top of the Tories' election campaign.

Yesterday he defended his actions: "It is a personal vendetta based on what they have done to the NHS. The death and suffering they have caused to so many ordinary people in this country — which is something I have watched with growing despair and anger over the last 18 years — is why I feel so strongly."

Tory MPs accused Mr Clifford, a Labour supporter, of being in cahoots with the Labour Party, and called on Tony Blair to clarify whether he endorsed the campaign.

Roger Gale, chairman of the Tory backbench media committee, said: "We knew this was going to be a dirty election, but I don't think that is what the public were expecting from the goodly, godly Mr Blair."

Mr Clifford insisted there was "no conspiracy involved. I don't have one rule for Tories and another for Labour MPs. If this was a Labour MP I would treat the story in the same way."

Paul Stone: told story 'to expose hypocrisy'

Mr Stone, a former Young Conservative activist in Tory chairman Brian Mawhinney's constituency, said the impact on Mr Hayes's marriage and children — as well as on the Conservative Party — was not the main issue. He had told his story to expose hypocrisy in Westminster.

Admitting that he was involved in the relationship when aged 18 and therefore under the age of consent at the time, he said: "What happened, happened, and the chances are they would have found out anyway."

Further allegations appeared in newspapers yesterday, including Mr Stone's claims that he had regular unprotected sex with Mr Hayes, who is vice-chairman of the Commons Aids committee.

Yacht alarm gives hope for lone sailor

continued from page 1

man was spotted clinging to the upturned hull of his craft by an Australian airforce search plane. A liferaft was dropped to him. He is expected to be picked up today by a navy helicopter.

Mr Bullimore has been involved in single-handed ocean racing for around 25 years and was named yachtsman of the year in 1985/86 after winning the 1985 Round Britain race.

He has crossed the Atlantic 27 times since competing in his first transatlantic race in 1976.

The 60ft monohull Global Exide Challenger was specifically designed and built for long-distance offshore single-handed racing.

Veteran yachtsman Sir Robin Knox-Johnston described the area of the search as an expanse "feared by every seaman."

"When it really builds up you can get waves up to 120 feet. It is the only area of the world where the waves go round the world without interruption — very cold, desolate, empty," he said.

He said he had competed against Mr Bullimore many times over the past 20 years. "He is a very experienced ocean racer. It is a very small field. There are not many of us who like going single-handed. If you were talking about people who have got the experience Tony would certainly be in the top 20 or 30."

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Whitbread Book of the Year: The runners and riders

Novel

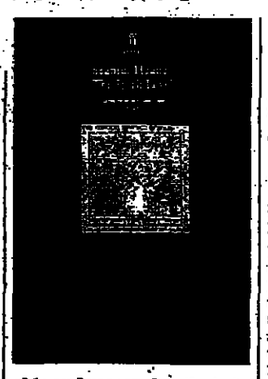
Every Man For Himself by Beryl Bainbridge (Duckworth, £14.99)

BAINBRIDGE'S first book for four years figured on many book-of-the-year lists. Lindsay Dugnid, reviewing it in the Guardian, said: "Every Man for Himself sets large, tragic events against small ludicrous ones, and then records . . . the ironies that are sparked off by the contact . . . As always, Bainbridge is interested in the random things which cluster round great events — the boxes packed with hair nets and ostrich plumes; Kitty, the Airedale, off her food and tied up aft ou F deck." She concluded: "The final pages which chronicle the last hours, as the ship goes down, with their astute descriptions of panic and bravery among the plutocrats, set against an apocalyptic backdrop, contain some of the best things Bainbridge has done."

Book of the year odds: William Hill, evens; Guardian, evens.

Poetry

The Spirit Level by Seamus Heaney (Faber and Faber, £14.99)



HEANEY'S new collection garnered respectful, rather than euphoric, reviews. In the Guardian, Ian Sansom said: "Keeping going is what The Spirit Level is really all about: there is the usual rich churning of language ("slabbery, clabbery"), and all the usual negotiations and balancing acts between the personal and the political, the private and the public ("When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write/ Something for us?" asks one republican interlocutor: "If I do write something,/ Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself," replies the poet-narrator). Heaney's poetry is so utterly reliable and reassuring that you just can't gainsay it . . . Those who do complain about it . . . always end up sounding churlish, short-tempered, jealous, or mad."

Odds: William Hill, 5-2; Guardian, 7-2.

Biography

Thomas Cranmer by Diarmaid MacCulloch (Yale University Press, £29.95)

THIS massive and hugely detailed life of Cranmer, by an adviser to former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Runcie, has been widely admired. Richard Marius, writing for the Guardian, said: "MacCulloch does not flinch before truth; he recounts Cranmer's contradictions and cruelties with no effort to paint them over with cosmetic strokes of hagiography . . . What a magnificent book this is! MacCulloch knows the sources like a woodsman who knows every tree in the forest. He writes with a narrative drive and an ability to capture scenes that makes us turn the pages with eager anticipation to see what happens next. He handles an enormous cast of characters with the aplomb of one who seems to have conversed with all of them."

Odds: William Hill, 7-2; Guardian, 4-1.

First novel

The Debt To Pleasure by John Lanchester (Picador, £15.99)

LANCHESTER'S book was hugely hyped by Picador and there was a certain sense of anticlimax when it eventually appeared: it could never have lived up to the claims being made for it.

Critics were divided and some thought it was too clever for its own good, but it is unquestionably an ambitious and beautifully written debut.

Richard Boston, in the Guardian, said: "Lanchester is clearly a descendant of Vladimir Nabokov. Winot [the narrator] is blood-brother to Humbert Humbert.

"He also has an ingredient of Charles Kinbote, the crazy narrator of Pale Fire (Nabokov's greatest achievement), which purports to be a scholarly edition of a poem in the way that Lanchester's purports to be a cookbook."

Odds: William Hill, 4-1; Guardian, 5-2.

Bainbridge resurfaces to win novel award

Stephen Moss on author's new victory in Whitbread prize

BERYL Bainbridge has turned the tables on Graham Swift, who beat her in the battle for the 1996 Booker prize, by winning the Whitbread novel award for Every Man For Himself, a typically wry treatment of the sinking of the Titanic.

Bainbridge's novel was rapturously received by critics and she had been the popular choice for the Booker, having been shortlisted three times previously. This is her second Whitbread win — her book Injury Time was named best novel in 1977.

"When I heard the news, I sang," said Bainbridge. "Success does give you a lift. Last time I won I was given a silver cigarette box with my name engraved on it. It's still on my bedside table. I don't suppose they award those in these more politically correct times."

Bainbridge said she was already at work on her next novel — "a book about the Crimean war that doesn't mention Florence Nightingale."

The other shortlisted books for the best novel prize, worth £2,000, were Swift's Last Orders, Patrick McGrath's Asylum, Fay Weldon's Worst Fears, J G Ballard's Cocaine Nights and Neil Bartlett's Mr Clive & Mr Page.

Bainbridge's book will now be a contender for the overall Whitbread Book of the Year, to be announced on January 21. Her rivals for that prize, worth £21,000, are the winners of the first novel, biography and poetry categories in the Whitbread awards.

John Lanchester's The Debt to Pleasure won the first novel prize. It is an elliptical, multi-layered book that combines travelogue, mystery, murder and restaurant criticism.

It saw off Seamus Deane's Guardian award-winning Reading in the Dark, Georgina Hammick's The Arizona Game, and Mary Morrissy's Mother of Pearl.

The winner of the poetry award was rather more predictable: Seamus Heaney for The Spirit Level. The judges for the award said: "Quite simply, this was the best book. It confirms Seamus Heaney's reputation as one of the greatest poets working in the English language."

The other shortlisted poetry collections were: Safe as Houses by U A Fanthorpe, The Thing in the Gap-Stone Stile by Alice Oswald; Expanded Universes by Christopher Reid and The Wound-dresser's Dream by Pauline Stainer.

The winner in the biography section was Diarmaid MacCulloch's Thomas Cranmer: A Life, a detailed account of the career of Henry VIII's archbishop and arch-fixer who was burnt at the stake by the Catholic Mary Tudor.

The other shortlisted biographies were George Eliot: A Life by Rosemary Ashton, The Unruly Queen: The Life of Queen Caroline by Flora Fraser, and Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett by James Knowlson.

The exclusion from the shortlist of Hermione Lee's Virginia Woolf and Ray Monk's Bertrand Russell caused controversy, and many critics argue that the Woolf biography should have been a strong contender.

In previous years, the winner of the Whitbread children's novel was also considered for the book of the year prize. But no children's book has ever won the overall award and it has now been separated from the rest, with a prize of £8,000 to be awarded on the same night as the book of the year.

The shortlisted titles for children's book of the year are: Anne Fine's The Tulip Touch, Russell Hoban's The Trokeville Way, Geraldine McCaughrean's Plundering Paradise and Philip Pullman's Clockwork or All Wound Up.

Bathing not drowning . . . Beryl Bainbridge at home. Critics praised her wry treatment of the sinking of the Titanic. "Success does give you a lift," she said PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN REARDON

Saudis reject nurses' denial

Kathy Evans

SAUDI ARABIA'S interior minister, Prince Nayef, seemed yesterday to rule out attempts by two British nurses to retract admissions that they murdered an Australian colleague at a medical centre in Dhahran.

"The investigation must take its course and confession to a crime means its admission," the minister said in a statement issued by the official Saudi news agency.

The minister pointed out that confessions were upheld only when rendered freely in front of a court: "Even with a confession, the prosecution will have to prove to the court the case against the two women," he said.

But Saleh Hejailan, the Saudi defence lawyer representing the two nurses — Lucille McLauchlan and Deborah Parry — yesterday confirmed that the women had repeated the confession in front of three judges.

"It is correct that a confession has been made in a preliminary hearing, but it can still be withdrawn," Mr Hejailan argued in an interview yesterday. "Although it is unusual, it is still acceptable and still legal."

Prince Nayef also rejected an earlier suggestion by Mr Hejailan that pressure had been applied by the Saudi police to make the two nurses confess to the killing of Yvonne Gilford, who was found on December 12.

"No one in our country is coerced to confess to something they didn't do," the minister said.

Mr Hejailan confirmed that he had met at the weekend senior Saudi officials who were "extremely co-operative". He also said he would pose written questions to the Saudi police querying their investigation, which is due to be completed this week.

"Lawyers have never been involved in investigations before. I may be re-writing Saudi history," he said.

Police officials were said to be angry about the nurses' allegations. They retracted their written statements of confession at the weekend during meetings with Mr Hejailan, alleging they were made after police promised they would not be prosecuted and could return home.

Meanwhile, the family of the murdered nurse appeared to waver again on whether to appeal for clemency for the two nurses. If found guilty, they could face public beheading.

"We think they should receive whatever the law dictates is the maximum penalty," Frank Gilford, the nurse's brother, said in Adelaide.

Woolwich flotation windfalls to average over £1,200

Richard Miles

THE Woolwich yesterday kicked off a year in which savers will receive cash and share windfalls totalling £20 billion by announcing a higher than expected payout for its members.

About 2.5 million savers and borrowers will receive free shares worth on average £1,233 when the Woolwich floats on the stock market in July with an estimated capital value of £3 billion.

The Halifax, Britain's biggest lender, is expected to make an announcement later this week, giving details of its £12 billion conversion to a bank in June, when 9 million savers will receive shares.

The Alliance & Leicester has already announced the terms of its £2.8 billion flotation, and in February a fourth building society, Northern Rock, will reveal the size of its windfall payouts ahead of conversion in the autumn.

The four societies are expected to inject as much as £20 billion into the economy, stoking the spending boom — but perhaps too late for Conservative election hopes.

Savers and borrowers with the Woolwich will each receive a basic distribution of 450 free shares, worth £844 assuming a share price of 187.5p. Members with a savings account and a mortgage are eligible for two parcels of shares.

In addition, the Woolwich is making a variable distribution of up to 2,000 shares to savers of two years' standing. To qualify they must have had an account balance of at least £1,000 on December 31 1995 and still hold this much on February 11 this year.

Eligible members will receive an extra four free shares for each £100 held above £1,000, up to a limit of £50,000. Theoretically, the maximum payout is £4,900, including the basic distribution of shares.

Woolwich members, many of whom live in London and the South-east, will be asked to vote on the conversion plans at a general meeting in London on February 11. For flotation to go ahead, the society needs 20 per cent of qualifying members to vote and a 75 per cent majority of those who do vote.

John Stewart, the chief executive, yesterday pleaded with members to back the Woolwich's plans, arguing that status as a top 10 bank would allow the society to expand much more rapidly. Rob Thomas, of investment bank UBS, said: "It will have a noticeable impact on spending."

Rate fears rise on windfall bonanza, and Notebook, page 11

Richard Tuttle is a hard-to-place figure on the fringes of what the accountants of art define as minimalism and post-minimalism, neo-Dadaism or — to use a further technical term from the critic's armoury — rubbish.
Adrian Searle

Arts G2 page 8

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Trials of new contraceptive may start in two years

Researchers test once-a-month pill

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

A CONTRACEPTIVE pill that needs to be taken only once a month is under development, and trials on its effectiveness could start within two years, researchers said yesterday.

The pill is not based on the female hormones such as oestrogen or progestogen used in existing contraceptives but is a low-dose version of the abortion pill mifepristone.

Small-scale studies of the pill's side effects, using volunteers, are under way in Edinburgh, and a pilot trial in Sweden has looked at its effectiveness as a contraceptive.

David Baird, professor of reproductive endocrinology at Edinburgh university, said the new pill, if successful, could be more convenient for women, have fewer side effects, and could be cheaper — making it particularly suitable for developing countries.

He said the use of mifepristone as a contraceptive, rather than as an agent to cause abortions, marked a new approach to family planning. Researchers were looking at the effects of a low dose of the drug on ovulation and on the endometrium, the lining of the womb.

"If you could interfere with ovulation or the development of the endometrium so pregnancy could not start, you would have the basis of a contraceptive pill," he said.

Around 30 women volunteers who have been sterilised have been given either mifepristone or one of three similar chemicals which block the action of female hormones.

Researchers are looking at menstruation patterns and possible side effects, although so far nothing serious has been detected. In Stockholm 20 women have taken the pill as a contraceptive, with promising results.

It is taken in the middle of the cycle, just before or after ovulation. Prof Baird said most women were uncertain of the time of ovulation, but reliable methods of predicting it were available and women would have a four or five day "window" each month in which to take the pill.

He said mifepristone's success as a "morning after" pill for emergency contraception had led scientists to consider its use at lower doses as a once-a-month pill.

"We have not tested directly for its contraceptive effectiveness, but such studies are possible within the next two years."

Conventional pills are taken by more than 3 million women in the UK, but it is estimated that one in five users regularly misses a pill and risks getting pregnant. Long-acting contraceptives, using implants or injections, have not proved popular.

"Surveys in this country and in Hong Kong have shown that a significant proportion of women would take a once-a-month pill," Prof Baird said. It need be taken only when needed.

"It is not just a matter of convenience: this pill would reduce the amount of hormones women take. Also, the hope is that it will be less expensive.

"Part of our work has been funded by the Medical Research Council and the Overseas Development Agency with a view to producing something suitable for developing countries."

From the video: An IRA man aims a rocket propelled grenade launcher and, below, Gerry Adams speaks

Video 'links Sinn Fein to IRA'

Vivek Chaudhary

HE appears in between shots of masked men carrying guns and then he gazes towards the camera giving a clenched fist salute.

Gerry Adams rarely misses the chance of indulging in controversial publicity, but this time the Sinn Fein leader has landed himself in a bit of hot water following his appearance on an IRA propaganda video.

The video, entitled The IRA in our Streets and in our Countryside, is for sale at the Sinn Fein bookshop in Belfast's Falls Road. It also features Sinn Fein's chief strategist Martin McGuinness.

Despite repeated claims that Sinn Fein and the IRA are separate organisations, Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness, who deny being members of the IRA, are shown on the video blaming the British government for the collapse of the ceasefire.

In one scene, Mr Adams is seen addressing a rally in Belfast where he gives a clenched fist salute. Moments later, the video cuts into shots of masked men firing automatic weapons and mortar bombs.

The Sinn Fein bookshop denied it is taking the video off the shelf following publicity surrounding Mr Adams's appearance on it and his clenched fist salute.

A spokesman said: "There is nothing sinister in a clenched fist salute at a rally. Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness have rejected the suggestion time and time again that they are in the IRA or leaders of the IRA."

Mr Adams, who is more accustomed to controversy for what he says rather than what he does, has come in for stinging criticism from politicians in Northern Ireland.

Peter Robinson, deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, said: "There have been a number of incidents which have demonstrated the close relationship.

"Sinn Fein and the IRA are one and the same organisation. I hope the Prime Minister will now recognise Sinn Fein for what it is."

The former Northern Ireland security minister, Michael Mates, was reported as saying: "It puts in black and white what we have known all along — there is no difference between Sinn Fein and the IRA."

The video ends with a masked man aiming a rocket-propelled grenade at the screen followed by the words "Will the Brits ever learn?"

Priest given year in jail for raiding church funds

Madeleine Bunting
Religious Affairs Editor

AN Anglican priest was jailed for a year yesterday for stealing more than £80,000 from church funds to settle debts and buy presents for friends.

The Rev Martyn Davis used the money to impress people and go on spending sprees as a way of overcoming depression which had led to problems with his marriage and alcohol, Northampton crown court was told.

Davis admitted seven charges of theft and asked for 300 charges of theft, deception and false accounting to be taken into account over a three year period when he worked as a youth officer for the Peterborough diocese.

Sentencing Davis to seven concurrent 12-month prison terms, Judge Thomas Corrie said he was guilty of a "gross breach of trust reposed in you as a diocesan youth officer."

He added: "You must know that a man in your position is supposed to give spiritual and moral guidance, to be honest and not dishonest.

"What you were not supposed to do is systematically plunder diocesan and other finances for your own purposes, fulfilling a lifestyle beyond your own income."

The court was told Davis managed to secure grants from charities, which included two from Comic Relief, one of £26,000 for a non-existent drugs project and £14,000 for a caravan. He also took more than £18,000 from church funds to pay credit card bills and buy a car for which he was at the same time falsely claiming a loan from the church.

> 'A man in your position is supposed to give spiritual and moral guidance'

Davis is now likely to face disqualification from the priesthood. The decision will be taken by the Bishop of Portsmouth — in whose diocese he has been living in Fareham, Hampshire, for the last two years — and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Since the theft was first alleged, Davis has had the Bishop of Portsmouth's permission to officiate as a priest on a voluntary basis pending the conclusion of the court case. He has also been receiving treatment at a private recovery centre.

Yesterday, the Rt Rev Paul Barber, Bishop of Brixworth, to whom Davis was accountable while in the Peterborough diocese, said accounting procedures had been tightened up after the thefts were revealed two years ago, and he hoped the case would not deter people from donating money to the Church.

It emerged yesterday in court Davis had been appointed to Peterborough diocese as a youth officer despite a previous conviction for making "menacing and indecent phone calls". Bishop Barber maintained he had closely supervised Davis's work.

Colleagues had complained that 37-year-old Davis, who has one child and has recently re-married, rarely mentioned spiritual matters and sounded more like "a businessman than a vicar".

Jail hostage nurse free

Dispensing procedures review likely in Scottish prisons

Erlend Clouston

THE Scottish prison service seems certain to review its dispensing procedures after a nurse spent almost 14 hours as the hostage of an inmate.

Karen Kinnear, aged 32, emerged shaken but unharmed from her overnight ordeal in the 8ft by 6ft cell. It is understood that James Holland and at least one other inmate of Glenochil prison, near Alloa, in central Scotland, were involved.

She had been held with a prison officer as they distributed medicine on the second floor of the jail's C block at about 4.30pm on Sunday. The officer, William Irvine, was released five hours later, also uninjured.

The prison service refused to reveal whether force had been required to end the crisis. Because of pending court proceedings few details were given of the incident which may have been linked to Glenochil's high incidence of drug taking. An official report has estimated that about 70 per cent of inmates are drug users. Separate police and prison service inquiries have begun.

Ms Kinnear is one of six male and female nurses employed at Glenochil, a 430-inmate jail. The precise motivation for the incident remains unclear. There was also confusion over the number of prisoners involved. Early reports had alleged that two accomplices had sided with Holland.

However, the negotiating team was taken aback to hear one of the three inmates claim that he, too, was being held against his will.

● Prisoners holding hostages in Dublin's Mountjoy jail were yesterday coming under increasing pressure to give up their protest against conditions, which has lasted almost 48 hours.

The six men holding four prison officers faced a barrage of appeals to release the men from a number of groups.

Reward offered to find killer of 'precious' girl

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

THOUSANDS of pounds have been offered for information leading to the conviction of the murderer of schoolgirl Nicola Dixon, who was killed on her way to meet friends on New Year's Eve.

Police yesterday released details of the car seen being driven away at speed from the scene of the killing in Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

Initially Nicola's parents had been too distressed to face the press but yesterday her father, Andrew Dixon, aged 46, a civil engineer, asked for the public's help.

"A large reward has been amassed to help catch the person who took our precious daughter's life," said Mr Dixon. "We thank all of those involved for this generosity. We hope it will help to catch the murderer quickly. People from the community and strangers who we may never meet have shown great kindness and help. They have shared our loss and helped lighten the burden."

Nicola Dixon, described by mother Rita (right) as a dear friend

Nicola, aged 17, was beaten to death on New Year's Eve in an alleyway beside Holy Trinity church, in Sutton Coldfield. She was on her way from a hospital social club disco to meet friends in a pub.

Nicola's mother, Rita, a teacher, said: "I loved Nicola not only as a daughter but also as a very dear friend. She talked to me with such enthusiasm about all her plans for the future. Her energy and happiness were an inspiration. I miss her dearly.

"She wanted a wider experience. Next year she wanted to perhaps work in France for a year. She always enjoyed helping children. Last year she helped a children's courier at a camp site in France. She also helped at an infants' school every week for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme."

Police are seeking the driver of a blue Mk2 Ford Fiesta which was seen being driven from the scene at 10.30pm on the night of the attack. The driver, described as white, about 5ft 10 inches tall, aged between 20 and 25 and clean shaven, and wearing a short bomber jacket and possibly jeans, was seen running towards the car.

A West Midlands police spoksman said that 450 calls had already been received. Local and national newspapers and individuals have put forward reward money which was now running into five figures.

An inquest into the death was yesterday opened and adjourned at Birmingham coroner's court.

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For just a part of a day, John Major stepped into an 'enchanted land' where all wayward behaviour is carefully scripted and only one 'old rogue' recalls life in Britain under Labour

Martin Wainwright on the stump in urban Emmerdale

John Major taking tea with Emmerdale characters Betty Eagleton and Seth Armstrong, who live happily 'in sin' on the TV show whose new £12 million studios in Leeds he opened yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

PM puts election froth on trip to soap set

THE Prime Minister chose an enchanted land yesterday for the unofficial launch of his election campaign — a village where only one old codger was around under a Labour government.

To murmurs of "what a nice man" and "isn't he charming", John Major made his way from true-blue Home Farm, via the village stores to the Woolpack Inn — all under one aluminium roof in the industrial heart of Leeds.

For this was Emmerdale: the heartland of ITV soap production whose cast, apart from mutton-chopped gamekeeper Seth Armstrong, all spoke their first lines after Mrs Thatcher's 1979 arrival in Downing Street.

Supervised by Yorkshire Tyne Tees TV's austere chief executive, Bruce Gyngell, the mini community leads a contented and largely upright life.

"British television is the best in the world, and Emmerdale is very much part of that success," beamed Mr Major, switching on the soap's £12 million new studios, the largest TV unit of its kind in the world. But even in this Yorkshire Eden, a worm was at work in the apple.

"Where's Zoë the gay vet?" demanded the spearhead of the press corps, brandishing tabloid headlines about Jerry Hayes, the latest Tory MP to face sex allegations.

YTTV's chairman, Ward Thomas, winced and repeatedly murmured: "We didn't want all this crowd, but the press officers insisted," as a spokesman explained that Zoë's Christmas holiday had been "extended by a couple of days".

In the absence of the radical vet, the biggest potential threat to the visit lay in old Seth, created in the days of Jim Callaghan and now defiantly living in sin with rosy-cheeked gossip Betty Eagleton. "Will you make an honest woman of me?" she asked the gamekeeper ("a loveable but roguish character," according to the official Emmerdale Companion) as the PM approached.

"It'd take a miracle, love," said Seth dourly, preparing to offer a sinister pink iced bun topped with a red cherry to Mr Major.

The bun was refused but the PM cosied up with Betty and her roguish beau on their sinful chintz sofa, deftly avoiding controversial subjects. "No, we didn't discuss family values," said Paula Tilbrook, who plays the dimpled Betty, "but he's a very nice man and I felt very much at home with him."

Mr Thomas, whose company was nearly bankrupted by Lady Thatcher's unusual auction system for ITV franchises, then got in a dig about YTTV's huge tax bill — but complimented Mr Major "for starting your campaign here with us".

Mr Major's aides hastily quashed the idea that this was an official election launch; but a brief "doorstep" interview session saw the PM lay into Labour and the Liberal Democrats as "profoundly dangerous and reckless" in their zeal for "an unthought-out package of constitutional reform which would end in tears".

After an hour in the safety of Emmerdale, Mr Major sallied out into the real world — praising Yorkshire business leaders at a reception; meeting staff in the canteen of a personal organiser distribution firm; and briefing local party workers at a private function at Headingley cricket ground.

Seth and the rest meanwhile went back to final preparations for tomorrow's unusually disturbing Emmerdale episode — when viewers will find "hot tempers lead to a violent act".

Passed-over MP who took gloss off Tory ad campaign

HUGH Dykes, the Conservative MP who yesterday helped to undermine the launch of his party's most expensive advertising campaign yet, has cause to be bitter, *writes Ewen MacAskill.*

An MP for more than 26 years, he has been repeatedly passed over for promotion and has not even gained a knighthood, almost automatic for a Tory with such long service.

Pro-European, he has watched as the party has become increasingly Euro-sceptical. Both Tory and Opposition MPs yesterday suggested revenge as an explanation for his entering talks on opposition plans for constitutional reform. However, those sympathetic to him denied that.

Hugh Dykes: No job and no knighthood

One pointed out that in Europe it was not unusual for political opponents to discuss issues of common interest.

Mr Dykes, MP for Harrow East, was a stockbroker and investment analyst before entering Parliament in 1970. His stance on issues other than Europe does not endear him to rightwing Tory Euro-sceptics. He opposed the poll tax and voted against charges for eye and dental checks and the freezing of child benefit.

Before Christmas, he and fellow Tory Sir John Gorst protested over the withdrawal of emergency facilities from a local hospital.

Sir John told the whips they could no longer rely on his vote. By comparison Mr Dykes simply held himself in reserve. But he may soon follow Sir John's course of action.

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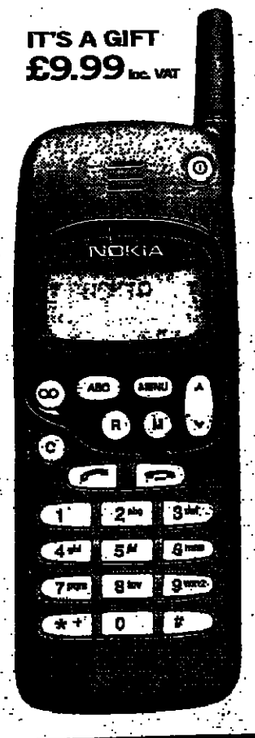

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'Do a Dunblane' man's promise

Lawrence Donegan

A FORMER soldier who threatened to "do a Dunblane" agreed yesterday to stay away from schools in a south London borough.

David Jennings, aged 50, who made the threat to a prison chaplain, also gave an undertaking not to carry firearms or threaten teachers, staff or pupils at more than 100 schools in Greenwich.

Mr Jennings, from Abbey Wood, south London, made the undertaking after negotiations between his lawyers and those representing Greenwich council, which had asked the High Court to impose a permanent injunction banning him from entering schools and council offices.

If he broke the terms of the agreement he could be imprisoned, Mr Jennings's lawyers said.

He made the remark at High Point prison, Suffolk, last summer in protest at the council's treatment of his children while they were in care. This led to the council obtaining an emergency injunction against him last week.

In a statement, Mr Jennings said his remarks had been misconstrued. He hoped the undertakings he had given to the court would allay the local residents' fears, and he accused the council of "blowing this matter out of all proportion".

"I have always strenuously denied that I am a danger to anyone and I am happy that the result of the proceedings is that I can carry on a normal life in my home area.

"I would like to give the public an absolute assurance that I do not possess any dangerous weapons and that I never intended to cause anxiety to the parents in the Greenwich area, of which I am one."

Mr Jennings was convicted in November 1995 of assaulting a social worker. He also has a previous conviction for possessing an air rifle. He was released from Swaleside prison, Kent, on Friday under police guard after completing his sentence.

Judith Barnes, Greenwich borough's solicitor, defended the council's action and said it had a duty to ensure the safety of teachers, staff and pupils. "The council, along with the police and the Attorney General's office, took these remarks seriously."

Sober Scots beat breath test

ONLY 0.79 per cent of Scots drivers breathalysed during the Christmas period were over the limit, *writes Erlend Clouston.*

They included 112 people denounced to police by neighbours and workmates on an experimental telephone spyline.

The statistics, released yesterday by the Association of Chief Police Officers of Scotland, show a further fall in the proportion of positive tests from last year's record low of 1.33 per cent. They are in marked contrast to a rise in English and Welsh positive tests.

It's cool, it's hot it's spicy — it's a Britain made for tourists

Gary Younge

BRITAIN, once a proud nation of kings and castles, is being marketed to foreigners as the groovy home of cuties and curries.

To attract young visitors and cash in on the new "Cool Britannia" image, the British Tourist Authority is projecting the country as the world capital of pop music, fashion and vivacious young women.

UK: The Guide, published for the second year by the BTA, has French, German, Italian and Spanish editions. More than 250,000 copies are being distributed worldwide from today.

"The aim is to try and attract the 18-30 age group, principally from America, Asia and Australia, by showing them the country as somewhere hip and trendy," a BTA spokeswoman said yesterday.

So the guide turns its back on Morris dancers in favour of the Spice Girls and has dethroned fish and chips and roast beef in favour of curry.

The BTA's chief executive, Anthony Sell, said Britain was being sold as modern, fashionable and stylish.

"Stylish" in this case includes a description of the Spice Girls as having a "we're-slags-and-proud-of-it" manner and a picture of the boxer Prince Naseem in leopard skin shorts with two women in the back of a car.

There is an element of wishful thinking. The guide translates Geordie phrases such as "Whey ye bugger man!" as "Good gracious me!" redefines Bournemouth almost beyond recognition: it used to be "the tap, tap, tap of walking sticks, but now it's the rap, rap, rap of dance music".

Seaside farce goes down pan

Martin Wainwright

THE GREAT Scarborough pantomime ended last night in a convincing victory for the resort's newly ennobled playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn after a "luvvies v lavvies" dispute over funding for his theatre.

The Labour-controlled council voted 35-9 to stump up an extra £50,000 after a move by a Conservative councillor, Jane Kenyon, that the money — the first tranche of £250,000 over five years — was "a grant too far".

Scarborough's Labour mayor, Mavis Don, said: "This is a victory for common sense. The extra money is an investment which the town cannot afford to miss."

The luvvie-lavvie tag followed critical letters about the new Stephen Joseph Theatre in the local Evening News, contrasting its funding bid with £566,000 cuts which threaten 20 toilets. Mrs Don said: "The luvvies v lavvies debate has been demeaning."

Scarborough has won exceptional loyalty from Ayckbourn, who has premiered almost all his 49 plays there. The second most-performed playwright in the world, after Shakespeare, he came to the resort in 1957 as a disciple of Stephen Joseph, the exponent of theatre-in-the-round.

His patience was stretched by the attacks on the new theatre, which converted a spectacular 1930s Art Deco Odeon with the help of £1.5 million lottery cash and £400,000 from his own pocket. He accused the town at Christmas of becoming a place where people would in future have a choice of "getting drink or buying shoes."

The theatre welcomed the council vote, which follows attendance figures reaching 98 per cent. Sir Alan said: "Most theatres are a partnership between private and public funding and without the extra money, Scarborough would lose both the building and a vital step in the town's recovery. We generate 10 times more in revenue than we have asked for."

An unrepentant Ms Kenyon said: "North Yorkshire county council will now have to find money to match our £50,000 and that is likely to come from the education budget."

"Blair aides" means Alastair Campbell or his sourcerer's apprentice, Tim Allen. "Senior Liberal Democrats" means anyone but Liz Lynne.
A Westminster glossary

News in brief

Growing oil slick nears Japan coast

A SIX-MILE wide oil spill from a sunken Russian tanker grew bigger and crept closer to Japan's northern coast yesterday, defying efforts by ships and helicopters to break up the pollution before it reached rich fishing grounds.

A Japanese maritime safety agency spokesman said the spill, already described as the country's second-biggest, was spreading as oil seeped from ruptured tanks in the stern of the vessel where the majority of the 19,000 tonnes of heavy fuel oil was stored.

The spokesman said the tanker's bow and the oil slick surrounding it could wash ashore on Japan's largest island, Honshu, as early as today.

The 13,000-tonne Nakhodka was torn in two in storms in the Sea of Japan last Thursday as it was carrying fuel for power stations in Russia's far eastern Kamchatka pensinsula region. The Russian news agency Tass said yesterday that the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, had ordered the region's armed forces to spare fuel from their own resources to help desperate local power stations. Moscow had also transferred additional funds to the local administration. — *Reuter, Tokyo and Moscow.*

Churches slate Shell

THE World Council of Churches has accused Nigeria's military regime of widespread oppression in oil-rich Ogoniland and attacked the Shell oil company for causing environmental devastation there. The accusations are made in a 106-page report issued yesterday after a visit to Nigeria last year by a senior WCC official, Deborah Robinson.

"Intimidation, rape, arrests, torture, shooting and looting by the soldiers continues to occur," declares the report, Ogoni: The Struggle Continues.

"It is no wonder why Shell has been the target of international sanctions: its environmental record in Ogoniland and in other minority oil-producing areas is distasteful," the report says.

A Shell spokesman in London said the company, which halted its operations in Ogoniland in 1993 because of intimidation by Ogoni activists, would not comment until it had details of the report's allegations. — *Reuter, Geneva.*

Syria accuses Israel

ISRAEL is preparing for more attacks against Syria and Lebanon, an official Syrian daily newspaper, Tishreen, said yesterday, warning that a new round of violence would not exclude the Jewish state.

The Syrian vice-president, Abdel-Halim Khaddam, in remarks published yesterday, reiterated Damascus's accusation that Israel was behind a bus blast in Damascus on New Year's Eve which killed 11 people and wounded 42. Israel has described the accusation as "an outright lie". — *Reuter, Damascus.*

Girls 'stabbed classmate'

TWO Polish girls aged 14 confessed to stabbing a classmate to death in the south-western Polish city of Wroclaw, a police spokesman said yesterday. "They said they invited their friend for a walk along the river and then stabbed her a number of times in the chest and stomach with a hunting knife," he said. The motive was not immediately clear. — *Reuter, Warsaw.*

Saddam urges Arab march

IN AN address marking the 76th anniversary of Iraq's armed forces, Saddam Hussein urged Arabs yesterday to open a new chapter and march "on a path that essentially leads to the service of the Arab nation, its poor and those Arabs who have lost their food, national and medical security and the simplest means of living and life".

Wearing his field marshal's uniform, he said the Arab countries that sided with the United States and its allies in the 1991 Gulf war should have directed their effort against the occupation of Arab land by Israel, Syria and Iran. — *Reuter, Baghdad.*

State funeral for Bertil

PRINCE BERTIL of Sweden, whose clandestine romance with a divorced British actress touched hearts across the world, will have a state funeral on January 13, the royal court announced yesterday. Bertil, grand old man of the Swedish royal family, died in his sleep on Sunday aged 84, after ailing for several years.

He spent 33 years in the public eye without revealing his love for Lilian Craig, for fear of jeopardising the monarchy. They finally married in 1976. — *Reuter, Stockholm.*

Former presidential adviser Dick Morris and his wife Eileen McGann pictured shortly before she announced on Sunday that she was leaving him. She cited constant media attention since revelations that he was a customer of prostitute Sherry Rowlands. He resigned during the Democratic National Convention in August after reports that he let Ms Rowlands listen to telephone conversations with Mr Clinton PHOTOGRAPH: TANNEN MAURY

Helicopters of the Tokyo metropolitan fire department fly over fire engines spraying coloured water into the sky at the New Year's review yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: TORU YAMANAKA

Pakistani generals get a slice of political power

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi and Phil Goodwin in Islamabad

PAKISTAN'S interim government gave the military a formal share of power yesterday, establishing a national security council with a broad mandate encompassing the economy as well as defence.

Although Pakistan's generals, who have held power for half of the 50 years since independence, have long been suspected of controlling civilian governments too, the council marks the military's first official role in democratic politics.

Even the late dictator General Mohammed Zia ul-Haq was thwarted by his opponents in an attempt to push through a similar measure in the Eighties.

The 10-member council — to include the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, army, navy and air force commanders, and the president, prime minister and other ministers — will "give mature advice to the government of the day", the information minister, Ershad Haqqani, said.

There were fears yesterday that the move would further weaken Pakistan's fragile democracy.

No government has managed to serve a full term since independence, and civilian governments have been wary of upsetting the military since Zia's death in 1988.

In November Benazir Bhutto's government was sacked, to allegations of human rights abuses, financial incompetence and rampant corruption. The interim government has promised to hold elections on February 3 and to root out corrupt politicians and bureaucrats.

The military is believed to have supported Ms Bhutto's dismissal by President Farooq Leghari, as well as the dismissals of the two previous governments.

Sartaj Aziz, a senior member of Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, said yesterday that if his party came to power it would probably keep the new council.

"I think this measure will be viewed with concern [by those who fear] that probably it is undermining the political system," he said. "But I feel that if the next government works within the rules of the game, then these concerns could be allayed and the body could become one of the normal state functioning bodies."

The council will have the right to formulate defence policy and bring it into line with domestic and foreign policy.

It will be able to make recommendations on internal security, emergency rule and "any other matters of national importance".

It will also offer advice on defence budgets, reducing the prospect that Pakistan will trim military spending — currently a quarter of the budget.

"This does not augur well for a parliamentary form of government," The Nation newspaper said. "Does all this mean that the parliament does not really matter?"

Danger of playing colonialist role

AP in Bangui

OPPOSITION leaders in the Central African Republic yesterday condemned France's intervention in a military mutiny in the capital as a new attempt at colonisation.

In France, Lionel Jospin, leader of the opposition Socialist Party, warned against France "being dragged into a military quagmire".

French troops stormed a rebel base in Bangui on Sunday after rebels killed two French soldiers. The mutineers want the resignation of President Ange-Félix Patassé, who they say has ignored demands for wage increases and undermined the army.

Le Monde

FRANCE has come down on the side of Mr Patassé, even if it vigorously denies this. Two thousand French soldiers have just offered an unexpected reprieve to the president whom certain Paris officials hope will survive, but whom others denounce for his tribalism and propensity to empty the state coffers.

The Central African Republic president was elected by universal suffrage in 1993. But in two years, his administration has been marked by mistakes and scandals. His country is the only one in the region not to have re-established relations with the international financial institutions. While he jailed those loyal to General Kolingba — his predecessor — Mr Patassé was also distributing payments with a munificence bearing no relation to the country's true resources.

Why did the French intervene? Is their agenda to preserve the largest French base in central Africa or to assist central Africa along the path to development and democracy? If the former is the case, it only remains to quash the rebellion. For the latter to be viable however, it is necessary to seriously review the form of a presence as anachronistic as it is risky. At a time when France, with others, is assisting many African countries to form a pluralist base for democracy, the intervention in Bangui illustrates again the experimental nature of a policy which wavers between the client-led servicing of the past and a new approach to relations with black Africa.

Whereas Jacques Chirac had declared at the time of the Rwandan crisis that the army would not take any more "unilateral action" in Africa, this weekend's intervention again risks stirring African public opinion against Paris. Somewhere between France's shaky withdrawal and her aggressive commando policies there is surely room for a new vision.

S Korean unions defy president

Peter Beaumont in Seoul

SOUTH KOREAN union leaders say they will not appear before state prosecutors today, defying summonses issued on the orders of President Kim Young-sam and putting themselves at risk of arrest.

The president ordered the summonsing of 20 leaders of the outlawed Confederation of Trade Unions yesterday, escalating his showdown with the striking unions.

The senior prosecutor, Lee Sang-hyong, said about half of the leaders had to report to the Seoul prosecution office and the others to local prosecutors responsible for provincial areas, or face arrest.

Kwon Young-il, president of the confederation, told a press conference: "We will not respond to any prosecution summons."

The summonses were issued as the confederation staged its first big show of strength in Seoul since the end of the New Year holidays on Sunday.

About 12,000 protestors, braving snow and sub-zero temperatures, halted traffic in the city centre and clashed with riot police after marching from the Chong-Myo palace to a second rally at the cathedral at Myong-dong.

Members of both the *nochong* (official) labour organisations and the outlawed *minjunochong* are angry about draconian new labour and national security laws sneaked through the national assembly at 6am on Boxing Day while opposition deputies were still asleep. The laws let companies lay off hitherto heavily protected workers and sack strikers.

The protest coincided with walk-outs — now illegal — throughout the country by about 100,000 industrial and white-collar workers.

Leaders of the official unions warn that if the ruling party does not capitulate, it will call out public sector workers after January 11.

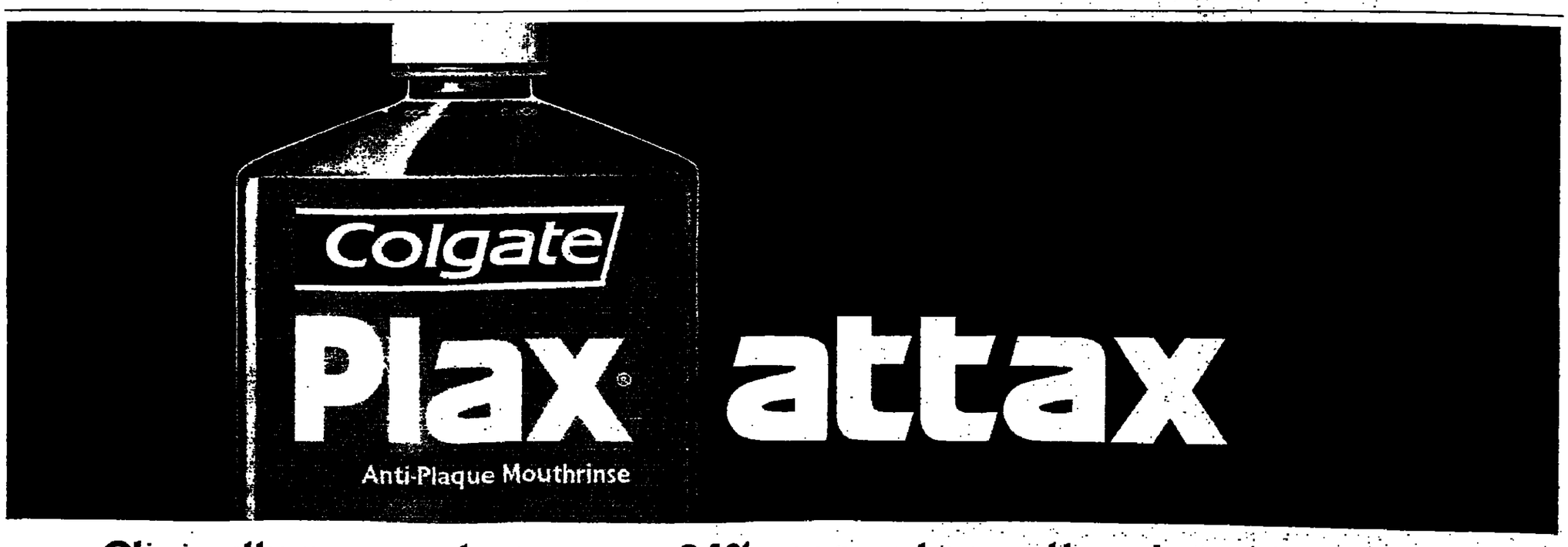
Yesterday's street protests were a blow to the president and his New Korea Party, which is entering a presidential election year with Mr Kim reduced to a new low of 18 per cent of public approval for his handling of the economy and social unrest.

Lee Kyong-sik, a 29-year-old advertising executive who attended the rally, said: "Korea's future will be decided by whether we have the right to organise in unions — not by any speeches by the ruling party."

> The strength and size of the protests have caught many by surprise

Large demonstrations are expected today at Youo-do park in Seoul to coincide with the president's first major press conference of the New Year. Mr Kim had hoped to mark the general strike's collapse after five days of public holidays, but the size and strength of the protests have caught many by surprise, not least the Korean stock market, which suffered fresh falls on news of the crackdown.

Production at Kia Motors was halted yesterday, but non-union workers and office staff were standing by to restart lines if necessary, a company official said. Hyundai Motor Co Ltd and 12 other firms affiliated to the Hyundai Group were idle, a union official said.



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Crisis in Belgrade

Serb army leader meets protesters

Julian Borger
Eastern Europe Correspondent

DEMOCRACY demonstrators were offered a veiled but unmistakable gesture of support by the Yugoslav army yesterday when its commander met opposition activists campaigning against government election rigging.

The army chief of staff, General Momcilo Perisic, spoke to a delegation of student protesters for more than an hour at his Belgrade headquarters, and later issued a statement calling for a democratic solution to Serbia's seven-week political crisis.

The statement conspicuously avoided any expression of support for President Slobodan Milosevic, who has faced a continuous campaign of street protests since he annulled the opposition's local election victories in November.

"General Perisic underlined the Yugoslav army's ... special interest in seeing that all current problems are overcome within the legal institutions of the system in a manner deployed in democratic countries," it said.

It added that such an approach was essential if Serbia was to secure re-entry to the international community.

Western governments have made it clear that full recognition of the election results, in which the opposition Zajedno (Together) coalition won control of Belgrade and most other main cities, is part of the price of re-entry.

Diplomats and analysts in Belgrade said that the meeting and the statement represented a coded but clear attack on the president.

"It is the first time the army has met any political organisation outside the regime," said Dejan Anastasijevic, a writer for the weekly magazine Vreme.

"And it seems General Perisic was generally benevolent in his approach to the students. He did not use any of the language of the Milosevic propaganda machine against them."

> 'Gen Perisic did not use any of the regime's propaganda'

A string of defeats in 1995 and severe cuts in military spending have left Serbia's barracks simmering with resentment.

Soldiers wages are badly in arrears and some army units have had their electricity supply cut off for non-payment.

Several units have sent unsigned letters of support to the demonstrators, but so far only a handful of the army's 30,000 officers have openly joined the ranks of the protesters.

But at a meeting of the national security council soon after the demonstrations began, Gen Perisic is reported to have told the president that the army would not intervene to stop the protests.

Dusan Vasiljevic, one of the students at yesterday's meeting, said the commander repeated his promise that there would be "no repeat of 1991", when tanks were brought on to the streets of Belgrade to crush demonstrations against Mr Milosevic.

Gen Perisic's meeting with demonstrators underlines the Milosevic regime's increasing isolation, coming three days after a strongly worded denunciation by Serbia's Orthodox Church.

But diplomats say Mr Milosevic decided long ago to allow the army and Church — the traditional pillars of the state — to wither, and rely on the 80,000-strong police force, the rigidly-controlled media and a network of semi-legal business groups.

Those remaining props still appear to be solid.

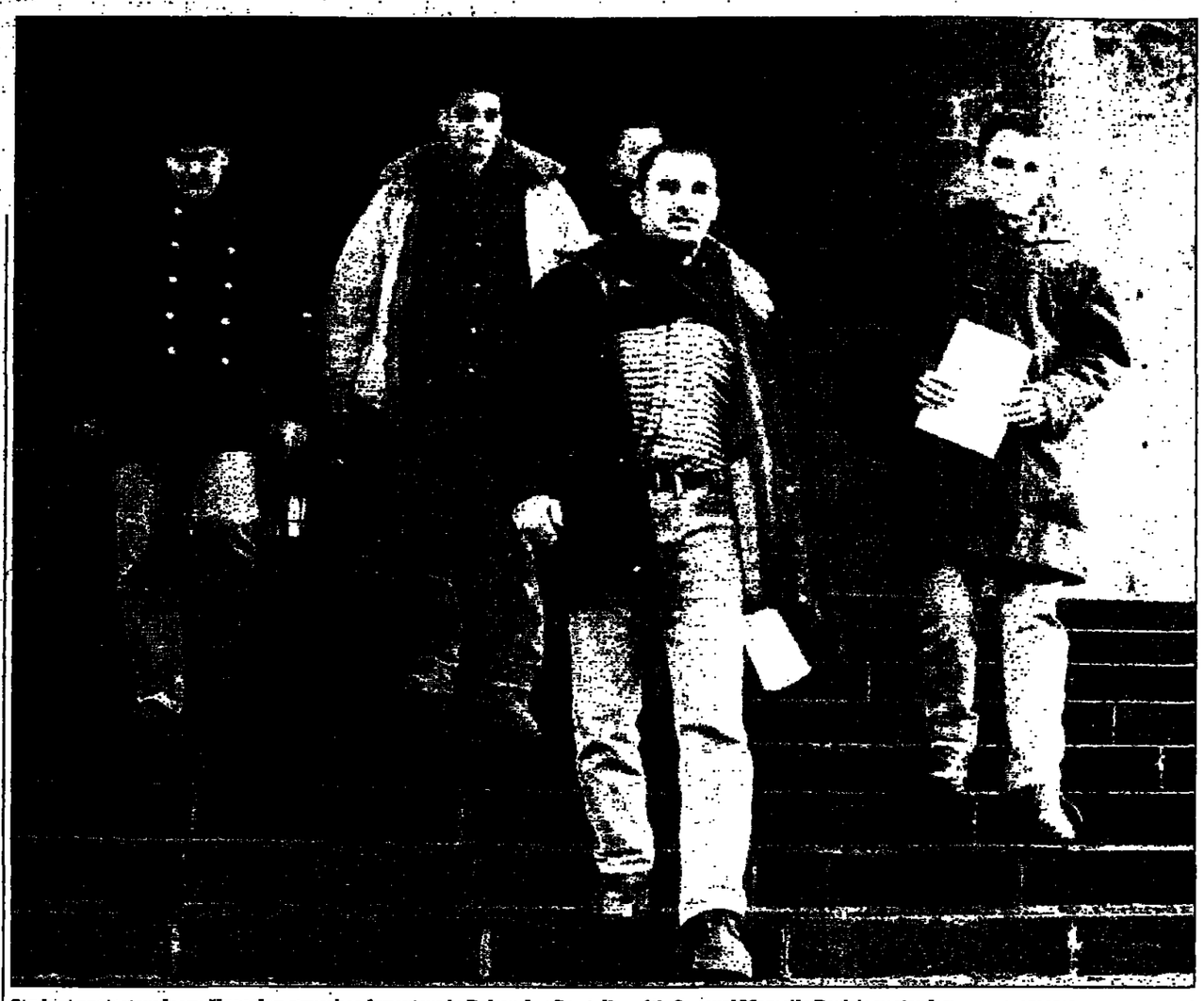
The students also met the interior minister, Zoran Sokolovic, yesterday, but failed to persuade him to remove riot police squads from the streets.

They said afterwards that from Thursday they would no longer back off when confronted by police.

Mr Vasiljevic said Serbia would "explode" after January 9 if police continued to prevent peaceful marches.

Demonstrators marched to St Sava's cathedral last night — the Orthodox Christmas Eve — for midnight mass to mark the 50th consecutive day of protests.

Leader comment, page 8



Student protesters leave Yugoslav army headquarters in Belgrade after talks with General Momcilo Perisic yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: IVAN MILUTINOVIC

Yeltsin cancels his meetings

David Hearst in Moscow

TWO weeks after returning to work, Boris Yeltsin set off a fresh health scare yesterday by cancelling all his appointments for the coming days.

His aides said he had a "heavy cold" and temperature, but denied that the illness was related to the president's heart condition.

Mr Yeltsin held two meetings yesterday against the advice of his doctors, who had warned him about the danger of rushing back to work after his operation in November.

The Kremlin is trying to prove that Mr Yeltsin's programme is full and the country is governed by an active president. But Mr Yeltsin's few appearances before the cameras are carefully doctored, to minimise the sight of a shaking hand or a nodding head.

Sergei Yastrzhembski, the president's press secretary, said that preparations for visits to Holland and Germany were "in full swing".

The meeting Mr Yeltsin attended confirmed Russia's position on the eastward expansion of Nato. Mr Yeltsin summoned his political and military leadership, ordering them to work out Russia's response to Nato enlargement plans.

Mr Yastrzhemski said: "A plan of action will be worked out on Russia's position, its negative position. Consequently, action plans can be worked out for various circumstances. Nato expansion can, after all, be multi-faceted and could involve various decisions, so Russia's position must include possible adequate steps for various scenarios."

When he met Chancellor Helmut Kohl on Saturday, Mr Yeltsin demanded a legally binding commitment from Nato to involve Russia in formal consultations. Russia also insisted that Nato's military structures — conventional or nuclear — should not be extended to any new members.

Mr Yeltsin's nationalist aide, Sergei Shakrai, said that Russia should also call into question its obligations to the arms reduction treaties it has signed, and forge ahead with union with Belarus.

This was later denied by Mr Zastrzhemski.

The West has been surprised by Russia's Nato offensive and this will complicate preparations for a meeting in Madrid at which Nato is expected to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the alliance.

If Nato acquiesces, Russia will be seen as dictating terms, depriving new members of the full security umbrella. If Nato forges ahead with expansion, relations with Russia will undoubtedly suffer.

The Nato issue will dominate forthcoming visits to Moscow by the French president, Jacques Chirac, and John Mayor.

Stalemate dulls hopes of early end to Peruvian siege

With the use of force being ruled out, the government seems set on wearing the rebels down, writes **Jane Díaz-Límaco** in Lima

THE Peruvian government has apparently chosen a strategy of wearing down to exhaustion the Tupac Amaru rebels who are holding 74 hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima. The 21-day-old crisis has taken on a new, slower pace since New Year's Day, with no hostages being released since then.

The stalemate has dulled expectations of a fast conclusion to the crisis. In the first two weeks of the siege, the rebels released hostages almost daily.

Visits by the main Red Cross mediator, Michel Minnig, and Bishop Juan Luis Cipriani, a close ally of President Alberto Fujimori, have continued, but less frequently.

The lack of developments have left much room for speculation. The Lima media seized on a letter signed by four opposition MPs that appeared to back a military solution of taking the residence by force.

The letter said all possibilities to rescue the hostages alive must be explored. However, it added: "If that possibility is denied and the price demanded [by the rebels] is the destruction of law and security, then the national interest should come first."

One of the signatories, the People's Action Party leader, Lourdes Flores, said the letter stressed that the government should refuse rebel demands to free any prisoner or alter any prison sentences or laws.

But despite the signatories' attempt to give political support to the storming of the residence by the security forces, most analysts said that option was extremely remote.

Raul González, a specialist in security matters, said: "The military option has been ruled out." The threat of force might be employed as a negotiating tactic, but was an option only if the rebels harmed any of the hostages, something they seem unlikely to do, he said.

> 'This will continue until the terrorists are physically and mentally worn out'

"To intervene militarily with 700 journalists watching would not only be inadvisable, it would be stupid," Mr González said. The government and Tupac Amuru rebels had one point in common — that it would be in neither's interests for the siege to end in bloodshed.

With the audacious seizure of hostages from more than 25 countries on December 17, and the image since then of rebels who treat their captives with care, the Tupac Amaru guerrillas have achieved a publicity coup they cannot afford to squander, Mr González said.

The fact that 19 Japanese diplomats and businessmen remain inside the residence is another strong argument against any force being used. As long as the hostages remain unharmed, Tokyo, which has a history of negotiating with kidnappers, would strongly object to a military option.

The analyst said he believed negotiations were slower but were continuing, probably with more senior leaders of the rebel movement outside the residence.

He said that the longer the siege lasted the more events would run in the government's favour. Media interest was already declining and the government had reduced the importance of the captives by replacing many of the police chiefs being held hostage.

Although the rebel commando leader, Néstor Cerpa, has told reporters he is in no hurry to resolve the stand-off, a retired general, José Pastor, said the strategy of drawing out negotiations would play in the government's favour.

"I think the government is applying the correct strategy, that of exhaustion," he said. "I think this will continue until the terrorists are physically and mentally worn out and they reach a solution that is favourable to the government."

But there are signs that the pace is frustrating for some in military circles. One hardline retired general, Gaston Ibanez, said a military option should be a last resort, but the crisis should not be allowed to go on for longer than a "reasonable period".

Gen Ibanez said the government should set a deadline of one week, seeking either the rebels' surrender or an attack before January 13, when Ecuador's president, Abdala Bucaran, is due to begin his first official visit to Peru.

Meanwhile Bolivia's foreign minister, Antonio Aranibar, arrived in Lima on Sunday to discuss ways of ending the crisis. The Bolivian ambassador is among the hostages and is said to be in ill health.

"My presence here is intended to bear witness to the concern of the Bolivian government about our ambassador," Mr Aranibar said. "The ambassador suffers from hypertension and diabetes, which require special care."

Russians defend arms sale to Cypriots

AP in Moscow

RUSSIA defended its arms deal with Cyprus yesterday in the face of criticism from the United States and Britain, saying the sale of an advanced air defence system to the Greek Cypriot government could not be perceived as a threat.

Turkey, which maintains 30,000 troops in the north of the island, said the purchase of the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system was "aggressive" and went "far beyond the limits of self defence".

But a Russian foreign ministry spokesman, Gennady Tarasov, said Russia has no intention of ending its military co-operation with Cyprus.

"It is groundless to assess the purchase of some kinds of defensive weaponry by the legitimate and internationally recognised government of the Republic of Cyprus as a threat," Mr Tarasov told the Itar-Tass news agency.

A Russian military expert, General Nikolai Leonov, insisted that the S-300 system could not alter the balance of power in the region.

Gen Leonov said the system can strike warplanes from up to 90 miles, destroy cruise missiles from up to 24 miles and has a 95 per cent hit probability, exceeding similar systems — including the US Patriot.

Washington called the purchase a "new and destabilising element" and said it comes at the time of increased efforts to achieve a settlement.

In London, a Foreign Office spokesman said that the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, had "made it quite clear the international community has indicated further increases in military strength on either side would be of serious concern and we would reiterate that point".

Government apology to Mulroney settles libel case

David Crary in Toronto

THE Canadian government apologised yesterday to the former prime minister Brian Mulroney for suggesting that he took bribes for an aircraft contract, averting an unprecedented libel trial.

Under the settlement the government agreed to pay his legal bills, reportedly several hundred thousand dollars, for pre-trial work.

Mr Mulroney's lawsuit sought the biggest libel award in Canadian history — C$50 million (£22.1 million) — and was the first filed against the government by a former prime minister. His lawyer, Gerald Tremblay, read a statement as the settlement was made public in the Quebec superior court, where the trial was to have opened yesterday.

"The government of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) regret any damage suffered by Mr Mulroney and his family and fully apologise to them," it said.

"Based on the evidence received to date, the RCMP acknowledges that any of the conclusions of wrongdoing by the former prime minister were and are unjustified."

Mr Mulroney, prime minister from 1984 to 1993, filed the suit in November 1995 against the justice department and the police. He contended that he was libelled in a letter sent to the Swiss authorities as part of an investigation into allegations that he took bribes in the 1988 sale of 34 Airbus jets to Air Canada, then state-run.

The letter, from a justice department official, requesting the freezing of three Swiss bank accounts, said the investigation "involves criminal activity on the part of a former prime minister".

Brian Mulroney took the government to task

The government argued that the letter was a standard investigative tool and was intended to be confidential. But its contents were leaked to the Financial Post, a Toronto-based daily, which broke the story.

Within hours Mr Mulroney — now on several company boards — announced that he would sue, because the "false and reckless" allegations had damaged his reputation.

His critics pointed out that repeated scandals in Mr Mulroney's cabinet had already damaged his reputation so badly that he left office with an approval rating of 10 per cent, a record low in Canada.

The government's lawyers have claimed that Mr Mulroney's entourage engineered the leak so that he could file a lawsuit to divert the investigation.

The justice minister, Allan Rock, said the settlement was "in the best interest of the Canadian government, the justice system and taxpayers". He stressed that police would continue the Airbus investigation and had not granted Mr Mulroney immunity.

Mr Tremblay said Mr Mulroney was elated. "His name has been totally vindicated. That is the only real thing that he always wanted." — AP.

News in brief

22 killed by Muslim rebels

Muslim guerrillas killed 18 people and wounded 18 others in Douaouda, Tipaza province, yesterday and killed four others in Algiers.

A security forces statement blamed the attack on a "group of terrorists". In Algiers guerrillas broke into an estate agency in Ain Benian suburb and killed the director and three female employees. — Reuter.

Cyberspace ruling

A Paris court is to rule on February 24 on a legal challenge lodged yesterday to the use of English without French translations on an Internet site established by the French campus in Metz, Lorraine, of the Georgia Institute of Technology. — Reuter.

Free media call

Hong Kong's top civil servant, Anson Chan, urged the territory's media yesterday to uphold press freedom after China resumes sovereignty on July 1. — Reuter.

Boat victims

At least 33 people died when an overloaded passenger boat collided with a freighter in fog and sank in a river in south-west China, a Shanghai newspaper reported yesterday. — AP.

Safe landing

A man who stripped down to his underwear and scaled three storeys of the Ansonia hotel, Manhattan, New York, lost his grip and landed safely on a giant air bag inflated by the police. — AP.

Old timers' war

George Beaty, a 100-year-old first world war veteran, was beaten to death at a hospital in Durham, North Carolina, by a 77-year-old patient who went after him with a walking frame, police said. — AP.

Skinny soldiers

Thousands of Russian soldiers are badly underweight and some are even suffering malnutrition for want of decent food, the daily Moskovsky Komsomolets said yesterday. — AP.

Airport blockage

A South African Airways Boeing 747 blew out 16 tyres during a scheduled landing at Frankfurt airport, blocking a main runway for more than seven hours, an airport official said yesterday. — Reuter.

Journalist freed

A military appeals court in Beirut yesterday ordered the release of the Lebanese journalist Pierre Atallah, aged 84, charged with contacts with Israel. The court set bail at six million Lebanese pounds (£2,000). — Reuter.

Diplomatic move

President Eduard Shevardnadze of Georgia sent condolences yesterday to the family of an American teenager killed in a car crash in Washington involving a Georgian diplomat. — AP.

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Men are much more affected by arguments than women. They are likely to start "flooding" at a much lower level of criticism, and they stay in a flooded state for longer.

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Ulster's dead end politics

Progress is impossible unless there's a ceasefire

THE EFFECTS of the extended general election campaign are dire enough in mainland Britain. But they pale into insignificance when compared with the consequences in Northern Ireland. Here, we face nothing more threatening than negative poster campaigns and radio interviews with tetchy politicians. There, the long suspension of normal political life has become positively lethal.

Yesterday morning, terrorists drove up to the Northern Ireland High Court building in Belfast and launched a rocket attack on a security post. The previous day a 250lb explosive device was discovered and disarmed in South Armagh. On New Year's Eve the IRA abandoned a gigantic 1,000lb bomb in the grounds of Belfast castle. Five days before Christmas they tried to murder a loyalist politician while he was visiting his sick son in hospital. Fortunately, no one has yet died as a result of any of these incidents, a fact which has led some to speculate that they are all carefully contrived warnings rather than genuine attacks. But it can now only be a matter of time before someone again perishes at the IRA's hands. The public's luck is sure to run out soon.

There are still four months before the general election is scheduled to take place. Rightly or wrongly, but wholly predictably, a politically beleaguered Conservative government in London is not going to take any kind of Northern Ireland initiative this side of polling day. If a Labour government is elected, further weeks will have to pass before any fresh moves are made. So the Northern Ireland peace process is therefore likely to remain in suspended animation for at least the first half of 1997. One may regret this, but realistically there is not much that anyone can do about it.

For the IRA to crank up the violence at such a time is a particularly fatuous tactic. No good can come of it in any way. The IRA are not going to bomb their way into political negotiations. They have even succeeded in alienating the long-suffering John Hume. The British government is certainly not going to make concessions in these circumstances. Nor is the Irish government, which could face an election itself this autumn. And it seems deeply unlikely that renewed shooting and bombing is going to win votes at the elections for Sinn Fein. All that will happen is that people will get killed, that the atmosphere of fear will deepen, and that the prospects of a principled settlement will diminish. To call yesterday's attack "regrettable", as Gerry Adams did, is just a cop-out.

As ever, the IRA acts from motives which most people find hard to understand, much less to support. But they are clearly intent on provoking a response either from the security forces or from the loyalist paramilitaries. They are doing so because their view of the world and perhaps their existence as an organisation depend upon the continuation of confrontation. They need to promote an embattled atmosphere within the nationalist population of Northern Ireland, partly in order to justify the continuation of their bombing campaigns and partly in order to maximise Sinn Fein's vote.

There could hardly be a better example of the bankruptcy of the IRA's approach. They are offering dead end politics of the most uncompromising kind. Such actions make it impossible for other parties to treat Sinn Fein as anything other than a pariah. The IRA must be able to see this, and therefore must see it as acceptable. Yet the only way forward for republicanism and for Northern Ireland is exactly opposite to the one now being followed. It is for a ceasefire to be reinstated. Without that, even slow progress is impossible.

More support, less investigation

The Government can't have it both ways with social workers

IS THE Government listening to its own advice? Just six months ago on completion of 20 government-sponsored research studies on child abuse, the social service minister released a final report for social workers and teachers under a press release headlined: "Closer working with families needed". Six months on the Prime Minister discloses to the Daily Telegraph that one of his key election aims will be to re-establish Conservative credentials by campaigning to curb "meddling" social workers and promising to defend the family against the interfering state. No one should expect rational policy-making in an election but this is absurd.

According to the Daily Telegraph, Mr Major believes families need more help to reassert themselves over faceless bureaucrats and politically correct social workers. This may seem like a good political wheeze for the kids in Conservative Central Office, but they might try reading their own government's research which was designed to scotch such myths. There are 11 million children in England. A mere 160,000 are referred to the child protection system in any year of whom 96 per cent stay with their parents. A majority of the other four per cent are returned within six months. The main message from the researchers was that families need more state support, not less. The system was still skewed too much towards investigating abuse and too little towards providing help and support to families under stress. It was not a new message. A similar finding was made by the Audit Commission in 1995.

The Prime Minister was not setting out serious policy options but exploiting base political prejudices. Social workers are good Daily Telegraph bogey people but there will be little resonance elsewhere. There have been too many notorious reminders in the last three decades — Maria Colwell, Jasmine Beckford, Rikki Neave — of what happens to children when social workers are not interventionist enough. Yet, ironically, nearly all professional observers — the Government's social service advisers, its researchers, and the Audit Commission — now agree there should be less investigation of suspect abuse and more support to potentially vulnerable families. The reason social workers have refused to make the switch is simple: the refusal of ministers to provide them with political protection. A headline in a Guardian story last year — "Child abuse inquiries to be cut" — had ministers scurrying for cover. There was no political support for the switch because the blame for the next abuse scandal would fall on political rather than professional heads. It would be nice to think Mr Major was now giving them that go-ahead. But his spin doctors made clear it was nothing of the sort. They want the opposite: social workers to continue to concentrate on investigations so that politicians are protected from censure, while leaving them free to censure the social workers.

Jamming it up in the streets

With luck it will end Serbia's 50 years of political gridlock

FOR INVENTION blended with satire the street theatre of the Belgrade protestors is in a class of its own. For over 50 days they have managed to avoid giving President Milosevic the pretext for a crackdown. That became even less likely yesterday when General Perisic, chief of the general staff, expressed tacit sympathy with their cause. Sunday's motorised gridlock mocked the official ban on demonstrations which had been imposed on the grounds that they would "interfere with the traffic." Drivers of beaten up old "Yugos" made pertinent remarks about the president's fleet of BMWs. Their "breakdowns" were an apt metaphor for the shaky state of Mr Milosevic's rule — if it really is about to collapse.

This is a question in two parts. The first is whether the opposition can win, and the second is whether, if it does, it might offer a better alternative. Last week's statement from Serbian Orthodox Church leaders, calling on the president to acknowledge the results of the municipal elections, could be a turning point. But Mr Milosevic still has the police and the security services with him, and the ability to provoke a diversion elsewhere — for example in Kosovo where he has exploited ethnic tension with the Albanian population so successfully (and disastrously) before. At the moment, the odds remain even as to whether he will survive.

The second question can be answered more clearly. Yes, the main opposition leaders are more nationalist than democrat. They have flirted with the extreme right and are evasive on Bosnian Serb war crimes. But Serbia — as Civic Alliance president Vesna Pesic argued in the Guardian last week — is the only European country where the government has not changed for half a century. The Belgrade street performers have begun at last to crack the mould.

Letters to the Editor

West is best forgotten

IT depressed me to learn of the Official Solicitor's decision to sell the film rights of the West case. It depressed me enormously to read that Anthony Julius was scandalised at the decision of Portman Entertainment willingly to defer the making of a film of the case (The Week, January 4).

I lived in Cheltenham until November 1995. The day after she disappeared I drove past the bus stop from which Lucy Partington was abducted. I did so, in the course of travelling to work, five days a week, until I left the town. After learning of her murder and the probable manner of it, I rarely failed to think of her and the appalling suffering and terror she and other victims were subjected to. I have two daughters, now aged 26 and 20, who both still live and work in Cheltenham, the eldest less than a mile from the fated bus stop. Lucy would have been approximately the age of my eldest now. I shudder.

I know that films have been made of the Holocaust, but years later, when acts of kindness had become apparent which helped point up the horror. Even then, Primo Levi, himself no Philistine, could not reconcile himself to it. If Mr Julius could write me an artistic screenplay about the awful events and furnish me with a list of the uplifting artistic productions emanating from Portman Entertainment, then I might, in 50 years' time, say go ahead.
F J Curry.
Flat 2, 83 Port Street,
Evesham,
Worcs WR11 6AF.

ANTHONY Julius shows a lack of sympathy, compassion and understanding if he believes a great art form is needed to explain pain and the suffering of others. Has he no natural empathy?

Might I suggest that if he is in need of a film to explain his failure to grasp that which moves me to shame and revulsion, he tries counselling. Thus leaving art to satisfy, give pleasure, entertain and encourage imitation.
Martin Day.
New Bungalow,
Bishopsden Farm,
Biddenden, Kent TN27 8DS.

ANTHONY Julius makes an analogy with films about the Holocaust. Genocide is an horrific crime. As individuals, we do not associate ourselves with those crimes. We are appalled by them, collectively resolve to atone for them and try to warn against them recurring by portraying them in films and literature to ourselves and later generations. The crimes of personal gratification committed by such evil persons as Fred West are too close to us. We realise that the portrayal of gross depravity is not healing but prurient and liable to lead to the corruption of new victims.

The Wests' crimes are best consigned to oblivion with the other detritus of human evil. We will be reminded of them soon enough.
David Bond.
77 Oxlease, Witney,
Oxon OX8 6QY.

YES, of course the Fred West film should be made: the children will get lots of lovely money from it. Never mind the anguish they will suffer when the horrors which they experienced re-appear on the screen. When a doctor from the Maudsley endorses this view (Letters, January 6), it shows just how far the market economy has corrupted our health service.
David Blood.
42 Churston Gardens,
London N11 2NL.

Power in the wrong hands generates more heated debate

THE selection of non-sequiturs from David Porter, Chief Executive of the Association of Electricity Producers (Letters, January 2), omitted the most important point in the matter of security of electricity supply. The first obligation of the public-enterprise industry was to supply; the first obligation of a private-profit company is to maximise profit. If this requires zero reserves of plant and fuel, that is what we shall get; and any public complaint about loss of supply will be ignored.
Brooke Harvey.
Glenluce, Mill Road,
North End, Dunmow,
Essex CM6 3PE.

ROGER Morgan's account (Letters January 3) of the reasons for the imbalance of demand and generating capacity in the south of England is less than accurate. Before 1948, municipal and private electricity undertakings preferred to run their own power stations. Hence in London there was a string of such stations along the Thames: Barking, Brunswick Wharf, Bankside, Battersea, Fulham. The Thames provided cooling water and ready access for colliers bringing coal from the north-east.

The late-lamented Central Electricity Generating Board decided it was more economical to transmit energy from north to south in the form of electricity via the National Grid rather than as coal. Hence it commissioned a number of very large capacity stations on the major coalfields of Nottingham, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. If the supply industry had not been "Balkanised" to the greater glory of private greed, and the coal industry decimated, then this approach could still be the most economically viable.
Dennis Brooks.
11 Chalkeith Road,
Needham Market,
Suffolk IP6 8HA.

DURING the 1970s I worked as an engineer in the electricity industry. During the 1980s I moved to the then nationalised British Gas.

Regulations governing electricity supply were introduced to protect the interests of the consumer and the generator. The generators and the means of transmission were under the control of the CEGB. The Electricity Council had an overall responsibility to regulate the industry.

A regulatory body should now be established which is concerned not merely with financial performance but with technical security too.
Brian R Pateman.
Pant Y Craff,
Carmarthenshire SA40 9SB.

ROGER Morgan refers to the role that demand-side measures can play in enhancing the security of the nation's energy supply at times of pressure on the system. Local generation is a key part of this approach.

High-efficiency cogeneration systems are now firmly embedded in the UK electricity system — with a 50 per cent increase in local capacity since 1989.

Indeed, for every one megawatt of combined heat and power (CHP) capacity that is turned on, the UK's carbon emissions are reduced by 1,250 tonnes and local sources of heat supply are provided. In the last three years, 20,000 largely low-income consumers have got the benefit of low-cost home heating from CHP at over 60 new locations.

What is needed now is the political vision to harness the significant institutional changes that have occurred in the energy sector and to ensure that they reinforce the goals of sustainable development that should be at the heart of any new government.
David Green.
Director, Combined Heat and Power Association.
35/37 Grosvenor Gardens,
London SW1W 0BS.

Organic reaction

IT IS one of the great ironies of living in a rural part of Devon surrounded by both arable and livestock farming that we are unable to buy organic: the nearest supplier is in a city. We endorse wholeheartedly the substance of John Vidal's article (Farmers slow to kick the chemical habit, January 6).

The NFU will probably not wake up until we have a change of government, and even then they will do so kicking and screaming. In the meantime huge lorryloads of chemicals will continue to tear round these rural lanes delivering more and more pesticides and insecticides to local farms.

Labour's agriculture spokesperson, Elliot Morley, who in many respects has an enlightened approach to reducing livestock transportation and other agrarian policy reforms, must take note and when in government set targets for substantially increasing organic produce.
Robin Bevis.
Bank Cottage,
Sampford Courtenay,
Okehampton,
Devon EX20 2TA.

THE jaded palate of the rich may clamour for organic food as a new diversion. Alas, this is not the case for most people. Government money is better spent educating people what healthy eating is. Currently, organic may mean lower quality, with the potential of parasitic damage and associated plant toxins; and carcinogens from mould and bacterial contamination. Together with premium pricing by retailers for so-called organic food, there is a considerable disincentive to buy.

Living in rural northern Britain, I see farmers reducing their use of pesticides and herbicides. The wider use of integrated crop protection systems will see further reductions in the use of chemicals.

By the time organic producers have developed internationally accepted and adequately monitored systems, mainstream producers will have moved to a position beyond reproach. Good luck to the producers and retailers who can make a profit from the exploitation of popular fears in the meantime.
Iain McPhee.
Wellesley,
Station Road,
Brampton CA8 1EX.

Cricket caught in the slips

THE relationship between the steady decline in English cricket and the way in which the professional game is played in England could not be more obvious (How Chicken George put the cat among the pigeons for England's finest in a far-flung foreign field, January 4). The County Championship is a nice little club with little at stake. It makes little difference if a team comes third or 13th. There are too many games played and there are too many meaningless results played out in near-empty stadiums.

We must split the Championship into two leagues of 10 counties, with promotion and relegation and appropriate reward levels. Get rid of the torpor of the dreadful Sunday league and re-format the one-day cups. One cup should be open to all counties and one should be a competition open only to Division One sides.

If we do not take a more success-oriented, professional approach, we will never catch up with the likes of Australia, South Africa and the West Indies.
David Saitch.
5 Millfield Cottages,
Brighton BN2 1HG.

THE England team's humiliation by Zimbabwe will put the England Cricket Board under pressure to dismantle the basis of English cricket, the County Championship. This is not the solution. Cricketing success is invariably predicated on effective bowling. The standard delivery should be one which pitches in the batsman's "zone of uncertainty", on or marginally outside off stump, on a good length (that is, a couple of feet short of a full length). This area can be precisely located, and painted in white on practice pitches in nets, with a circle (strictly, a rectangle). The function of the coach would be simply to stand at the side of the net and tell the bowler how close he is to the mark.

Most England bowlers are clearly unaware of the zone of uncertainty and regularly miss it by several feet.

So before you demolish the beloved County Championship, have a go first with the old paint-brush. It will be much cheaper, and far more effective.
Neil Thomas.
80 Bishops Road,
Whitchurch,
Cardiff CF4 1LY.

Hidden costs of single currency

JOHN Cole (Letters, January 3) comments on the disagreement between Harold Wilson and Lord Cromer, Governor of the Bank of England, over interest rates and concludes that "... this is doubtless a tension which will continue in the next century whether the Central Bank is in Threadneedle Street or Frankfurt."

While this may be true of the former, it will certainly not be for the latter because, as Article 107 of the Maastricht Treaty states: "The Community institutions ... and governments of member states undertake .... not to seek to influence the members of the decision-making bodies of the European Central Bank ... in the performance of its tasks." Governments will be unable to approach the unelected and unaccountable Central Bank over policy issues like interest rates.

That is the price we will have to pay for the single currency.
Llew Smith MP.
Constituency Office,
23 Beaufort Street,
Brynmawr,
Gwent NP3 4AQ.

Gotcha!

WE all know of the Guardian's obsession with the Sun — and the way it steals our scoops — but Martin Linton's article (It's still up to you, my Sun, January 6) was breathtaking in its naivety. Despite his early days as a Daily Star reporter — where he liked to blame the subs for his mistakes — Mr Linton clearly has no personal experience of breaking political news. Anybody who believes a journalist can survive at Westminster on a diet of Tory Central Office hand-outs has no place in national newspapers. The heart sinks when someone from this source rings up with a "good story".

Mr Linton's trite examples of the Sun's co-called Tory bias ignore our coverage of stories which have so often dismayed Central Office and delighted Labour. By contrast, I cannot recall *any* occasion when the Mirror has seriously criticised Labour or embarrassed the party they so slavishly support.

Finally, on the question of bias, should not Mr Linton have pointed out that he is standing as a Labour candidate in the general election?
Trevor Kavanagh.
Political Editor, The Sun,
Press Gallery,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

A Country Diary

CHESHIRE: The grey heron, with head tucked down between its shoulders, was standing motionless in the middle of a pasture field just outside the village. There had been a light fall of snow during the night and, as I stood watching the bird, flakes started to appear again in front of my binoculars. Looking up I could see that the sky was full of ominous dark-grey clouds — there was obviously more snow to come which would be driven by the bitter easterly wind that had been with us all through Christmas. I turned back to the heron trying to imagine why it had chosen that particular field — was it ill? Had it succumbed to the harsh weather? I liked to think that it had done the rounds of all the local ponds, found them frozen solid and was resting, quietly wondering what to try next. That decision was made for it by two noisy carrion crows who swooped down from a nearby oak tree to move him on and out of their territory. The heron took off on broad, rounded wings and slowly flapped its way towards the village with the crows still in close pursuit, mobbing it from all sides. They eventually gave up the chase and returned to their oak tree. Seeing the crows reminded me of some strange behaviour I had witnessed by another pair on the edge of the moss just before Christmas. The birds had been sitting close to an old nest in a poplar tree when one began to pick up pieces of old nesting material and immediately discarding them. This happened four times, but the fifth twig was passed to the partner and then both birds flew off. I could only think that this had been a pair-bonding ritual. As I headed back to the village I could hear redwings overhead — flying west.

J M THOMPSON

Diary

Matthew Norman

IN news certain to rock heaven to its foundations, Rupert Murdoch is close to converting to Rome. The divine revelation came buried deep in a profile in Christmas Eve's Financial Times, in which Raymond Snoddy wrote: "Mr Murdoch is also thinking more of religion and his own mortality. 'I would describe myself as a mildly religious person. I am a disillusioned Presbyterian who goes with my wife to a Catholic church,' he says, adding that he is thinking of converting to Catholicism." Good grief. In flirting with Rome, Mr Murdoch joins a bandwagon already crowded with the likes of Princess Diana, Alan Clark, Liz Hurley and Mr Tony Blair. Should he take the plunge, however, some believe this will be God's biggest transfer coup since Ann Widdecombe, or even Little Gum Gum. "Everyone knows how heaven rejoices at a sinner that repenteth," says one top theologian, "and they don't come much bigger than him. Mind you, there are concerns," he adds. "Murdoch may enter the deal as junior partner, but it's odds on he'll do to God what he did to the squarial and have Him out on His ear within two years."

HATS aloft to my friend Andrew Lloyd-Webber. Andrew's ennoblement really is tremendous news for all who love the man and his marvellously original music. There is one worry, though, and it concerns the House of Lords's conveniences. As we know, noble Lord Andrew is very loath to vacate his bladder in company, and while West End first nighters may tolerate being escorted from the urinals, yanking a couple of viscounts from the porcelain is likely to lead to friction. We are even now trying to contact Lord Andrew's toilet spokesman Tim Bell for a quote, and will return to the matter when we have explored the options with Black Rod.

TO honour his contribution to the triumphant cricketing tour to Zimbabwe, Ian Botham's Deep Cover is hereby made the Diary Book of the Month. The novel (which was co-written with Dennis Coath, a regional ITV sports presenter) is a right riveting read, and to play ourselves in gently, we begin today with the blurb on the back of the book. "The England team for the winter tour to Karistan is about to be announced, and flamboyant Yorkshire all-rounder Kevin Sowerbutts thinks he's a certainty for the trip," writes Beefy, basing his central character on no one in particular. "A practical joker with a taste for the booze and an eye for the birds, 'Butty' also has a raw power that can strike fear into any opposition . . .".

Gotch

W

READERS of the Daily Mirror have a new legal adviser. He is solicitor Gary Jacobs, a friend of football agent Eric Hall, and a vast, likeable chap who introduced himself on Saturday in an article headlined "I'll bring YOU justice!". Stirring prose it was, too, right up to a final paragraph which began: "My skill is to cut through the c***." Either "cant" has become a dirty word at Canary Wharf (an intriguing thought, with Monty Montgomery at the helm) or Mr Jacobs must have filed his quotes by phone to a slightly deaf copy-taker. Whichever, we wish him luck with his new employer.

A SEISMIC communication from Olivera Amina, self-proclaimed "chosen and authorised servant of the Most High God". "In the name of Allah, most exalted and most merciful!" begins the letter, from South London. "By permission of God on 28.12.1996 a Word came to me through the Archangel Michael, who is my spiritual teacher, that very soon there will be an earthquake in the Balkans. I was instructed to make this information public." Thank you very much.

NEWS of the economic boom has yet to filter through to Somerset. A Taunton shop which opened two weeks before Christmas has now closed, leaving in its window the forlorn, scrawled message: "Opened in error."

Which party offers a bigger upheaval?

Commentary

Hugo Young

THE story has been over-written. Whether or not there will be a Lib-Lab pact on constitutional reform is, as yet, unknowable. The Lib Dems want to keep the possibility alive, and re-affirm their terms for a deal. That's about all that happened this weekend. But as well as being unanswerable, the question is in a sense irrelevant.

The story is already clear. Both these parties favour a long list of reforms, which represent by far the most radical challenge to conservatism that any modern British government of the left is capable of making.

If Labour is returned, it will set out on this perilous course and, whatever the formal arrangements, is certain to be supported by the party that has espoused reform for far longer. The inwardness of the Lib-Lab talks is different, having to do with the possible realignment of politics and reshaping of the electoral system. But those possibilities are miles down the road. For the present, the choice is already large enough. If you favour changing the rules of the game, vote Labour or Lib Dem. If you favour the status quo, vote Conservative. This is something on which, give or take a Hugh Dykes, the Tories are united. They are being true to their roots. What they promise, as regards the fundamental framework of rules and norms, is the reassuring security of what we know.

There is, however, a flaw in this picture of constitutional serenity. As against the coherent conservatism of its attitude to devolution, the Tory Party is evolving fast towards radical reaction in its attitude to the EU. The EU treaties and constitution, which have been the basic norm of political and economic life for almost 25 years, are now the target not merely of sceptic sniping but of a mainstream aggression, which is re-defining the party week by week.

The shifts in the leadership's position are bewildering even to one who follows them closely. Not long ago, just before Christmas, the official line on the EU Inter-Governmental Conference was that Britain still desired to marshal anti-integrationist forces on its side, and had an good chance of doing so. Douglas Hurd's old incantation about "Europe moving our way" remained the sense of much that was being said by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

Now, things have suddenly changed. Instead of riding on this tide of support, ministers have apparently decided the direction is so uncongenial that it must be stopped on the beaches, on the streets, from any bully-pulpit they can mount. The Minister of Health — of Health! — sees fit to recommend ("demand") an across-the-board "re-negotiation" of Britain's entire relationship with the EU and, far from being slapped down by Mr Rifkind or Mr Major, lures them both into the soothing confirmation that he was entirely in line with government policy.

No doubt they were doing their best to save the Cabinet from embarrassment. Thus does the ratchet of Europhobic opinion move another notch, at the behest of an ambitious lightweight politician who will lose the respect of the Tory left, even as he fails to replace it with anything but ridicule from the right.

But Mr Dorrell is, if nothing else, a weathervane. That will turn out to be his historic importance. His flailing "demand" to re-write Britain's European constitution, unrepudiated by anyone of importance, marks the moment when the party that took Britain into Europe becomes the party dominated by forces that want to take us out.

They will not, of course, admit that. Mr Dorrell, being a newcomer to the ranks, doesn't yet harbour even the secret wish. Quite the opposite. He wants it both ways. But so unreal is this "demand", so ludicrously thin-headed is it about both the treaty we signed in 1972 and the political circumstances the treaty created, that it can be seen only as the construct of a party prepared to undo the fundamental premise on which Britain entered the EEC: namely, that we were joining a collaborative enterprise, sacrificing some political independence by so doing, and can never expect to change it unilaterally.

This is now the fantasy the Tory leadership endorses. Mr Clarke, Mr Heseltine and Mr Gummer stand as beacons against it. On the single currency, Mr Major maintains a line which the Chancellor

Cabinet divides between scheming opportunists and spineless neurotics

prevents him from deserting. But on the broader front, the centre of gravity has fundamentally shifted, and not just for cosmetic or negotiating reasons. The will of the party, blindly lashing out, supports this "demand". The Cabinet is divided between scheming opportunists and spineless neurotics, leaving only a tiny band who are not prepared to take lessons in reality from Mr Redwood.

One certain consequence of Stephen Dorrell is that the supporters of this band will find their voice. Now that he has made apparent the weakness to which the pro-EU position has sunk in Tory politics, those who hold this position face a choice: speak for it, or see it disappear. The pretence that Dorrell was articulating a line helpful to party unity will soon be shown to be devoid of judgment.

The party's business supporters will despair to see its grip on the British national interest being terminally loosened by these hallucinations of national sovereignty, these crazy notions that it is for Britain alone to propose a new legal structure for the European Union, with the implication that otherwise Britain will leave or the project will collapse.

That is a very radical proposition. Masquerading as a reversion to historic destiny, to the grain of Britain, it posits a change in the rules which is just as profound as the reform of the Lords or the incorporation of the Human Rights Convention. And it would have a more immediate effect. The EU, its structures and laws, has become a given of life, especially economic life.

Tearing it apart, an idea which even Eurosceptics have only recently acknowledged, is a policy whose consequences have not begun to be thought out. It is a leap in the dark, yet one to which the Conservative Party is becoming inexorably committed. For how could they conduct themselves, if they won, other than as the sceptic wreckers they now promise to be?

The Lib-Lab constitutional manifesto, by comparison, is a model of reason, which has been refined over many years. It certainly has complications. But every time you hear Mr Major, glass of warm beer in hand, prophesying the doom it portends for the British way of life, consider which politicians are blundering towards the vaster upheaval they would rather we didn't expect.

Cut the cult of political personalities

Ian Aitken

IF THERE is one thing which unites politicians of all parties it is a shared conviction that newspapers, whether friendly or hostile, trivialise politics by concentrating on personalities instead of issues. Tony Benn is the most consistent proponent of this, probably because he has been subjected to so much personalised journalism. But it is a theme taken up by almost all politicians when in difficulty.

There is something in the criticism. Popular newspapers have always gone for personalities in preference to issues, in the belief that they make a more interesting (and more saleable) read. Indeed, Lord Beaverbrook made it a basic principle of Expressmanship: "Tell the news through the people who make it," was his central dictum.

But in recent years even the so-called serious newspapers have moved in the same direction. The news is increasingly told in terms of who is up and who is down. The once great Times, in its cheapo 10p edition yesterday, splashed pages one and three on the allegations (first published by its sister paper, the News of the World) of a homosexual relationship between an MP and an underage employee.

It is easy to blame this sort of development on the advent of Rupert Murdoch as the proprietor of broadsheets as well as tacky tabloids. For there is no doubt that Murdoch has reduced the standards as well as the cover price of his newspapers, encouraging a similar trend among his competitors. Private Eye was spot on years ago when it dubbed him the Dirty Digger.

But Rupe cannot be required to shoulder the entire blame. At least one other group of people has made a major contribution to the personalisation, and the trivialisation, of politics. They are the politicians themselves.

This isn't just because, in private, they endlessly talk about who's up and who's down, who's going to be promoted and who's going to be sacked. That has always been the case, as a quick read of Disraeli's splendid political novels — or Tony Benn's diaries — will confirm. What is new and disreputable is the readiness of even the most upright politicians to question the motives of their colleagues and rivals when they express views about the issues rather than the personalities.

Perhaps the most outrageous recent example of this unwillingness to credit fellow political practitioners with honestly-held beliefs was last week's furore over the supposed conversion of Stephen Dorrell, a long-standing Europhile, to mildly Eurosceptical views. The original story was first published in the Daily Telegraph, which is not so much Eurosceptic as Europhobic. But the scoop was immediately, and publicly, confirmed by Mr Dorrell.

No sooner were the words out of Mr Dorrell's lips than MPs on both sides were fighting each other to get into the television studios to denounce the Health Secretary. But their target wasn't the opinion he had expressed, it was his supposed motive in expressing it. The universal verdict was that he was trying to ingratiate himself with the Tory rightwing in order to give himself a better chance of winning the party leadership once John Major had lost the next election.

This opinion was not limited to known cynics. It was expressed most forcefully by upright souls like Menzies Campbell, a Lib-Dem frontbencher who has himself been suspected of an ambition to succeed his leader. Yet not even decent old Ming was prepared to entertain the possibility that Mr Dorrell — about as honest a man as you will find on the Tory benches these days — had changed his mind about Europe, or that his motive in saying what he said was to express the truth as he saw it.

Let's be realistic: if this mean-minded approach persists at Westminster then the prospect for conducting any kind of rational debate about great issues is pretty dismal. You cannot discuss the rights and wrongs of Britain's membership of the European Union — or of anything else — if every public utterance on the subject is dismissed as a cynical bid for personal advancement. If the contempt of ordinary voters for politicians deepens still further, the fault will lie with MPs rather than the media. So let's have a bit less personalised politics from you lot, if you please.

NEW Labour is said to be worried about the number of local nonentities being selected as parliamentary candidates, at the expense of those high-flying carpetbaggers who used to land seats under Old Labour. They are considering what can be done to ensure that the Labour benches contain enough potential ministers rather than enough potential parish councillors.

Alas, their best move might be to abandon the one-member-one-vote selection system bequeathed by the late John Smith: it may be democratic, but it does favour local heroes. The sad truth is that if you want future Hugh Gaitskells, Dick Crossmans or Michael Foots, then those much-maligned "party activists" who used to run the show were far more likely to pick them.

When the royal family's future is debated on TV tonight, one argument sure to be made for keeping it is that Britain's tourist industry needs it. But, asks **Phillip Hall**, is that actually true?

To see the Queen

WHEN ITV holds a debate tonight ending in a national phone-in poll on whether we still need the monarchy, the royal family will be in the firing line. Even if most people are not yet ready for a republic, the latest MORI poll shows the standing of the royal family has reached an all-time low since such surveys were started.

Hard-pressed monarchists find that the traditional justifications — the royal family sets a good example, makes us the envy of the world, etc — no longer convince as they used to. Royalists, such as the Daily Telegraph's editor, Charles Moore, frequently blame sections of the media for causing many of the royal woes, and maintain that a republic would be worse. Yet this still leaves the need for a positive argument in favour of the monarchy.

To fill this gap, one hears more and more that the monarchy is good for tourism. The argument is bound to be employed during tonight's debate. One suspects that it is meant to disarm those who find the hereditary privilege of the royals difficult to swallow, by using a neutral-sounding message: you don't have to love and admire the royals, merely regard them as useful. But just how valid is it when the evidence is examined?

The British Tourist Authority and others argue that pageantry and tradition play a large part in attracting tourists and that the royals are an important part of this. Britons spend much more on holidays abroad than foreigners spend here, but our tourist industry is very important, generating 4 per cent of total production and 7 per cent of employment.

After a few years' decline in Britain's share of world tourism, it started to pick up again in 1994. The majority of incoming tourists go to London and spend most of their time there. In 1995, 413,000 visitors (mostly foreign tourists) entered Buckingham Palace, open from mid-August to mid-October while the Queen holidays at Balmoral. Another 200,000 pay to see the Queen's Gallery and Royal Mews, which are part of the palace complex; perhaps as many as 200,000 see the Changing of the Guard free of charge from outside the palace gates. That makes 800,000 customers of the Palace in all.

The BTA argues that an existing monarchy will preserve that appeal better than an extinct one. "The Guards really *are* guarding the monarch, giving the ceremony an authentic flavour," says the authority's spokesperson, Isobel Coy. Yet the interest in the living monarchy, as typically found abroad, has not been so much about the finer points of which regiments take part in the Changing of the Guard, but more about Charles, Diana and Camilla. The US media attitude to the tangle that the stiff-upper-lipped Brits have got themselves into is frequently wry and sardonic. In the US, it is the newly-created, relatively pageantry-free and alternative royal, Diana (and, to a lesser extent, even Fergie), who draws the interest as a glamorous modern outcast from a moribund show.

France has long since been republican but Paris edges London out of the top spot as the most popular big-city tourist destination in Europe. And the untenanted royal palace at Versailles attracted more than four million visitors in 1996, plus another three million who only visited its gardens, a total of seven million. This dwarfs the 800,000 who visited the Buckingham Palace — even though Versailles is 13 miles from central Paris, whereas Buckingham Palace is very much part of the tourist round in central London.

Even if one adds together all the other royal attractions — Windsor Castle (1,200,000 visitors), Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh (290,000), the no longer royal-occupied Tower of London (2,500,000), Hampton Court (590,000) and other lesser-visited palaces — Versailles alone still, remarkably, remains ahead.

It is the very fact that the monarchy still exists which keeps down the numbers of visitors at Buckingham Palace, restricting access to the main palace to two months a year and to only a dozen rooms of the Queen's state apartments, which were first opened in 1993. "There's not enough on offer to justify the price" was the verdict of Which?, the independent consumer guide in September 1995, which gave it only one star out of five. The £8.50 entrance fee and profits from the gift shop go towards the cost of restoration after the 1992 fire at Windsor Castle.

Lecturers in the mainly new universities which prepare students for jobs in the tourism industry are uncertain about the role of the monarchy as a tourist attraction. James Swarbrooke of Sheffield Hallam University, who has written a book on tourist attractions, sees the monarchy as "simply one part of the heritage industry" which includes stately homes, churches and cathedrals, museums and art galleries, Shakespeare's birthplace at Stratford-upon-Avon, the Roman baths at Bath, Stonehenge and more.

He also argues that heritage "is of declining importance, especially in attracting younger tourists". They are more interested in Britain, and particularly London, as a centre for Britpop, fashion, design, restaurants, music in pubs and clubs and night life. London also offers shopping, from Harrods through to the street markets.

ABROAD, London is being lauded as a with-it, vibrant place. The American magazine, Newsweek, in a long article in November, told its readers that "there's plenty wrong with London" — increasing poverty, more violent crime, traffic jams and pollution. But its reporters nevertheless still hailed it as the "coolest city on the planet", echoing the American cliché about Swinging London in the sixties, rather as groups like Oasis and Blur echo the Beatles.

The British Tourist Authority is working hard to increase media hype abroad by jetting in foreign journalists and encouraging them to write of the wonders of London and the rest of the country. Interestingly, in recent years, it has recently been playing on this modern image rather than the heritage and tradition one, though officially it refers to the splendid mix between old and new in Britain and gives more than its due to the attraction of the monarchy.

To use the language of the advertising executive, it is seeking to reposition the country in world tourist markets, especially for the under-45s. Not needing any hype, or a royal connection, is the English language, which, of course, is spoken by the largest group to come to Britain — the Americans. The size of Heathrow, which makes it a gateway to Europe, also increases the chance that visitors from other continents will spend some time here.

There are some tourists for whom the royal family is massively important. A British company, Travel and Tourism International, organises a tour, aimed at the German market, centred on visits to places of royal interest. However, most visitors to cities just "see the sights" — museums plus monuments and buildings, old and new, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Tourists do that whatever city they are in.

Britain's competitive edge in attracting such tourists will depend less on its history and more on the country being seen as a "stylish destination", to use the expression of the BTA's chief executive. Ending the monarchy would provide greater access to Buckingham Palace (and its gardens) and St James' Palace.

Tour operators say that central London is in need of new major attractions. A republic could provide new tourist opportunities and release new forms of cultural energy. The argument that monarchists increasingly fall back on, that the monarchy is "good for tourism", remains at best unproven.

Phillip Hall is author of Royal Fortune: Tax, Money and the Monarchy (Bloomsbury)

Poverty is when you can't afford 50p

Imagine what it's like for many children living in the poorest parts of the world. Never to have eaten a decent meal, never to have drunk clean water and never to have had proper medical care

Yet for 50p a day you can help provide clean water, health care, education and agricultural skills – the things that could improve life not just for one child, but for a whole community

In return, you'll receive a photo and messages from the child you sponsor. We'll also keep you up-to-date with regular progress reports from our field workers. For so little, can you really not afford to give a child a chance in life?

Please sponsor a child today.

☐ Yes, I would like to sponsor a child and enclose my first contribution.
☐ £15 (monthly) ☐ £45 (yearly)
☐ I can't sponsor a child now, but enclose a gift of:
☐ £200 ☐ £100 ☐ £50 ☐ £25 ☐ £ _____
☐ Please send me further details about sponsoring a child, or call: 01480 81073.
Make cheques/POs payable to ACTIONAID, and send to: ACTIONAID, FREEPOST, BS4868, Chard, Somerset TA20 1BR. 1B102
Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____
Address _____
Postcode _____
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Sir James Comyn

Last of the great silks

Notable case history . . . Judge James Comyn

THERE can rarely have been a more humane judge than Sir James Comyn QC, who has died aged 75. In 1979 he transferred from the family division of the High Court to the Queen's Bench Division because he could no longer bear the daily distress paraded before him.

James Comyn, was born in County Dublin into a nationalist family which had, for a time, provided a safe house for Eammon de Valera. One of the few Irish legal figures this century to reach a senior judicial position in Britain, Comyn's fervent hope throughout his life was that, one day, there would be a united Ireland.

Both his father and uncle were at the Dublin Bar and Comyn displayed an early interest in the law. At the age of eight he was found in a silk dressing gown and his father's wig addressing 12 bottles of Guinness on behalf of a soda siphon.

He was educated at Oratory, of which in 1964 he became a governor, and then New College, Oxford. In 1940 he became the president of the Oxford Union defeating Roy Jenkins by, he said, four votes — Jenkins said it was five. He worked for the Irish Times and, briefly, for the BBC before he was called to the Bar in 1942 becoming a member of the Middle Temple and undertaking the run of briefs on which young barristers cut their teeth. It included one at the Lambeth County Court when, appearing on behalf of a landlord and applying for an eviction order against a middle-aged lady, the defendant reached into her handbag and threw a dead cat at him.

"Madam, if you do that again I shall commit you for contempt," said the judge.

By the time he was appointed to the Bench, Comyn was described along with the late Michael Eastham as "the last of the great all round common law silks". Amongst others he appeared for April Ashley in the Corbett v Corbett nullity suit; the Rolling Stone, Brian Jones; Lord Lucan in his custody battles; and the former Labour MP, Will Owen for whom he obtained an acquittal in an Old Bailey Secrets trial in April 1970. It was a notable week for Comyn because his prize bull, Victor of Kilberry, won the Owen Cup at the Royal Dublin Spring Show. He was said to be the first barrister to earn £100,000 a year.

In many ways, however, his best known client was the prison escaper Alfie Hinds for whom Comyn appeared in a libel action against Herbert Sparks, the officer whose evidence sent Hinds to prison for

> The defendant reached into her handbag and threw a dead cat at him

the September 1953 robbery at Maples, the Tottenham Court Road department store. Hinds continually protested his innocence and twice staged daring prison escapes to publicise his case. He was recaptured on both occasions but his chance came when in 1961 Sparks published his memoirs in The People. In those days a conviction was not a bar to bringing a libel action based on events and Hinds sued. Comyn poured cold water on the scientific evidence; Hinds's alibi witnesses stood up and, in a clinical display, Comyn effectively destroyed Spark in the witness box. Despite an unfavourable summing-up the jury awarded Hinds the then huge sum of £1,300. Hinds wanted to have his conviction quashed but Comyn's advice that the Court of Appeal would prove obdurate was correct. Almost immediately after the case the law was changed to prevent such civil actions being brought by defendants.

Throughout his Bar career, Comyn suffered disabling bouts of depression during which he would go to a nursing home. He would return after a month or six weeks, the ebullient and jovial man he was before his breakdown.

In 1947 he was called to the Irish Bar and to the Hong Kong Bar in 1969, the year after he had become a Master of the Inner Temple. He took silk in 1961 and was Recorder of Andover from 1964 to 1971, becoming the Honorary Life Recorder in 1972. He became a Recorder of the Crown Court in that year holding the appointment under 1977. He was appointed a High Court judge the following year.

One of his more notable cases on the High Court bench was for a tea-lady who successfully claimed she had suffered "tea-pot elbow". Comyn marched up and down the bench testing the strain of carrying a 10 pound teapot at arms' length. In 1981 he presided over what was then the longest running libel action when, after a six month trial, the jury found against the Moonies in their suit against the Daily Mail. One of the last he heard was when the actress Raquel Welch was awarded substantial damages for libel against a men's magazine relating to photographs they published.

He sat on the Parole Board from 1962 to 1994 becoming vice chairman in his last year, before which, in 1973 and 1974, he had chaired both the Court Line enquiry and the Solihull Hospital enquiry.

Sadly, the ill-health he suffered whilst at the Bar continued during his short term on the bench and he was prevailed upon to retire. He understood that pension arrangements would be put in place but, in the event, he was only awarded a substantially reduced one. He had been at the Bar in a period of high taxation and now life, for a time, became something of a struggle.

Happily, he enjoyed writing. A delightful raconteur, he wrote for the Justice of the Peace for some 50 years and produced a number of highly entertaining reminiscences — including *Their Friends at Court*, *Irish at Law*, *Lost Causes*. There was also *Leave to Appeal* which recounts the case of the builder who alleged he had damaged his tendons in a fall. He was awarded £30,000 to the displeasure of the insurance manager who swore the man would be followed night and day in an effort to prove him a swindler. "I'm going to Lourdes, next week," said the happy plaintiff. The dedication in Comyn's *Law without Gravity* is "To the man on the Clapham Omnibus who has stood so much".

During his retirement in Co Meath, he continued to improve his "Clareville" herd of Aberdeen-Angus. He was a regular correspondent with the newspapers, anticipating current government penal thinking by suggesting in 1989 a "confiscation and deprivation" scheme under which anything such as a television set, bicycle or car which a criminal might value be confiscated for a period of a few months. He supported the continued wearing of wigs in court and suggested in 1990 that the civil jury would be extinct by the end of the century.

In 1981 when his home in Co Meath was burned by the IRA he put in a claim for £180,000 and was delighted when the Irish government reduced it by only £2,000. Sadly, and irreplaceably, a great number of historical artefacts dating to the revolution were destroyed in the blaze.

In 1967 he married solicitor Anne Chaundler and they adopted a son and a daughter. In his later years, Comyn, a life-long heavy smoker of up to 80 Sweet Afton cigarettes a day, developed cancer. When in England, he could be found at Bar garden parties, his wit and charm undiminished by his suffering. At the time of his death he was writing a history of the common law. It was a task he found difficult. "I've never been able to understand the law of leaseholds properly," he confided to a publishing friend.

James Morton

James Comyn, judge, born March 8, 1921; died January 5, 1997

Virginia Downing

A curtain calling

VIRGINIA Downing, who has died aged 92, was a stage and film actress for more than 70 years. Born in Washington DC, she was educated in England, France and at Bryn Mawr College in the United States. She was nearing 20 when she decided to make theatre her vocation.

Downing played all sorts of roles in England, Ireland and America. She produced a solid repertory of parts and, lanky and good looking with an attractive figure, she was a director's actor and a stalwart team player in any production whether in London's West End or on New York's Broadway.

I directed her for the American Theatre Unit during the war when she played with conviction and charm a leading role in Patrick Hamilton's *Gaslight*, staged as *Angel Street* at the old Scala Theatre off London's Tottenham Court Road — later the site of the birth of Channel 4.

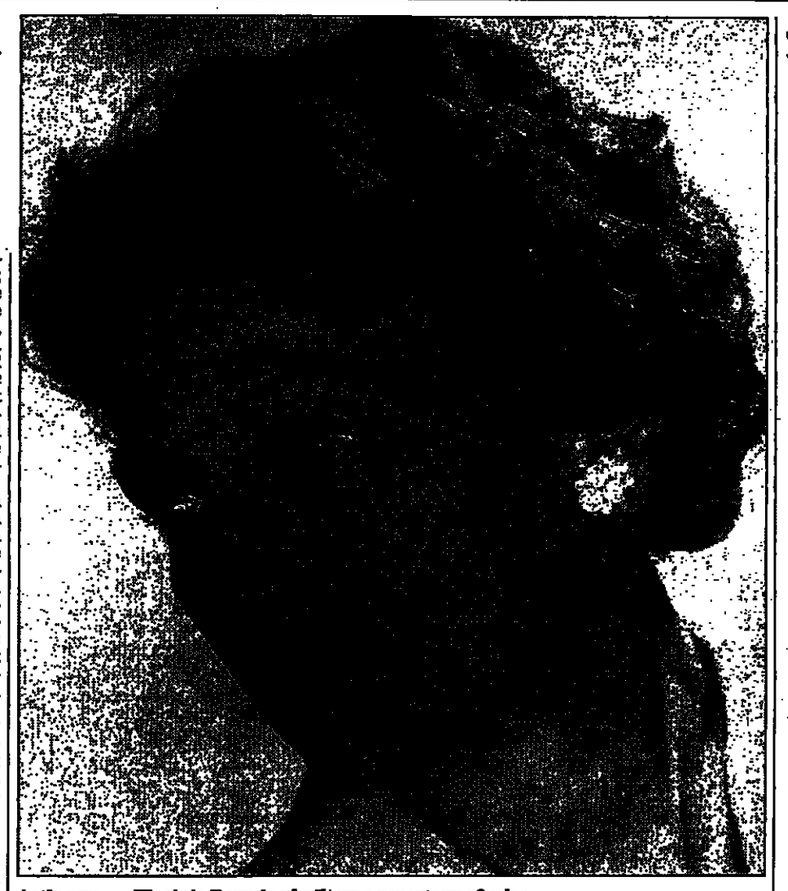
Downing's work with blacklisted actors, and participation in protest marches against the McCarthy anti-communist witch-hunts led to her being questioned by the UnAmerican Activities Committee. Her dignity and honest answers meant that she was let off and her career in the US was unaffected by her clear leftwing sympathies.

She played the Duchess of York in *Richard II* opposite Denzel Washington for the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Delacorte Theatre; the other woman opposite Henry Fonda and Olivia de Havilland in *A Gift of Time*, directed by Garson Kanin. For Kanin she also appeared in *We Have Also Lived in the Castle* with Shirley Knight and Alan Webb. Other Broadway appearances included *The Cradle will Rock* and the most recent production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

Off-Broadway Virginia played with Marian Seldes in *Mercy Street* at the American Place Theatre, and at the Greenwich News she distinguished herself in Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*. She was frequently to return to the play and it was in that original O'Casey cast that she met, and later married, the character actor John Leighton.

Outstanding among her many other American appearances was her award-winning performance as the mother in D H Lawrence's *The Daughter-in-Law* in Princeton, New Jersey, for which she was awarded the drama critics award. Most recently she acted in the American premiere of Samuel Beckett's radio play *All That Fall* at St Marks Church in the New York Bowery.

In film, she shared memorable scenes with Elizabeth Taylor and Laurence Harvey in *Butterfield 8* and Frank Gilroy's *The Gig* and *The Luckiest Man in the World*.



Acting up . . . Virginia Downing built up a repertory of roles

In her eighties she visited Ireland with the O'Casey Company in *The Plough and the Stars*. Her death, theatrical in itself, occurred while she was rehearsing a one-woman show about George Eliot that she had written herself. It would have been her swan song to a distinguished stage career. The final curtain was taken when she ascended the steps after a recent rehearsal and collapsed as she put her key in the lock of the front door of her apartment block. She will be missed.

Peter Cotes

Virginia Downing, actress, born March 7, 1904; died November 21, 1996

John Duffey

Bluegrass boy

FOR a generation of American folk music lovers in the 1950s and 1960s, John Duffey, who has died at 62, was a Moses leading the faithful to the promised land of bluegrass. As mandolin player and tenor singer with the Country Gentlemen and the Seldom Scene, he spanned nearly 40 years of bluegrass activity in Washington DC, the music's second home after Kentucky.

Washington-born, Duffey grew up in Bethesda, Maryland. He began playing guitar in his teens, then moved on to mandolin. In 1957 he met guitarist Charlie Waller and they decided to form a band, adding Jim Cox and, later, banjoist Eddie Adcock. Cox was replaced by bassist Tom Gray to form the Country Gentlemen, a band whose approach to bluegrass generated enormous enthusiasm for the music amongst Washington's young.

It was bluegrass sung and played not with the cold-eyed Appalachian purposefulness and uniform suits of Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys or the Stanley Brothers but with the ingratiating, sweet-tempered and casually dressed presentation of a coffee house folk group like the Kingston Trio. In the words of Dudley Connell, the leader of the Johnson Mountain boys who recently joined Duffey in the Seldom Scene, "he helped make bluegrass acceptable to the urban masses by his choice of material and style of performance."

For more than a decade, the Country Gentlemen were the leading second-generation bluegrass band. Duffey, never fond of the travelling, left in 1969 to work as a musical instrument repairman. When he rejoined Tom Gray in 1971 in a new band with singer John Starling, banjoist Ben Eldridge and Dobro player Mike Auldridge, all of whom had full-time jobs as well, it was on the understanding that they would play only occasionally and locally. Charlie Waller, hearing about this elusive band, named it the Seldom Scene.

Their resolve was shattered by success. In the band's quarter-century career it played all over the US as well as Japan and Europe and made many albums, including an affecting 20th-anniversary reunion concert at the Birchmore in Alexandria, Virginia, with a cameo appearance by Emmylou Harris.

There had been a few personnel changes over the years, but no change in the band's silky handling of bluegrass standards and contemporary songs. Duffey, singing in his angelic high tenor — "he hits notes that only NASA can monitor," wrote the journalist Bill Vernon — decorating their tunes with audacious mandolin breaks and contributing to the band's throwaway on-stage humour. In September 1996, together with the other original Country Gentlemen, he was inducted into the International Bluegrass Music Association's Hall of Fame.

Tony Russell

John Duffey, bluegrass musician, born March 4, 1934; died December 10, 1996

Birthdays

Richard Armstrong, conductor, 54; **Dr Tim Black**, chief executive, Marie Stopes International, 60; **Iona Brown**, violinist and musical director, 56; **Alan Butcher**, cricketer, 43; **Hazel Connsell**, circuit judge, 66; **Kenny Davern**, jazz clarinettist, 62; **Hunter Davies**, journalist and author, 61; **Tony Elliott**, publisher, founder Time Out, 50; **Stuart Hampson**, chairman, John Lewis Partnership, 50; **the Rt Rev William Herbert**, Bishop of St Albans, 53; **Tom Kiernan**, chairman, European Rugby Cup, 58; **Ian La Frenais**, screenwriter and producer, 60; **Malcolm MacDonald**, footballer and manager, 47; **Maureen MacGlashan**, ambassador to the Holy See, 59; **Ross Norman**, squash player, 38; **Paul Prichard**, cricketer, 32; **Lady Anne Scott**, former chair, Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, 65; **Prof Keble Sykes**, physical chemist, 76; **Will Wyatt**, chief exexutive, Broadcast, BBC, 55; **Roger Young**, director-general, Institute of Management, 57.

Death Notices

HOPE, Eric Alfred. Beloved husband, father, grandfather and brother on January 3rd 1997 at Wexham Park Hospital. A tireless campaigner for peace, justice and equality. Funeral Slough Crematorium, Tuesday January 14th at 12 noon. Family flowers only. Donations to Amnesty International c/o, 32 West St, Marlow, Bucks SL7 2NB.

KENNAUGH, Richard John. January 2nd 1997 aged 33 years, much loved younger son of Maureen and the late Canon Tom Kennaugh. Brother of Mary, Peter and Andrew. Uncle to Stephen, John, David and Rebecca. All enquiries to Quinns Funeral Service, Hoylake, Wirral 0151 632 2205.

TEAR, Patrick Allen died suddenly and peacefully at home on 28th December 1996, aged 68 years. He will be much missed by his family, children, grandchildren and his many friends and colleagues. Funeral service at the Meeting House, University of Sussex at 11am on 11th January 1997. Family flowers only. Donations to MDNA c/o Cooper & Son Funeral Services, 42 High Street, Lewes, Sussex. 01273 475557.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to St Joseph, prayers answered. C.P.

In Memoriam

BELL, Lydia Alice, died in Stepping Hill Hospital, 07/1/94, aged 84. Dedicated teacher in Stockport.

Memorial Services

BROWN, Sir William. A service of thanksgiving and remembrance for the life of Sir William Brown, CBE will be held at Glasgow Cathedral on Saturday 11th January, 1997 at 11am.

Births

STEVENSON. To Ginny (née Barbour) and Philip a daughter, Matilda Elizabeth Mary, on 28th December 1996 in Oxford.

■ To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4129 between 9am and 3pm Mon-Fri

Jean-Pierre Lévy

Resistance web

JEAN-PIERRE Lèvy, who has died aged 85, distanced himself from the men who grafted a postwar career in the French intelligentsia on to their heroic Resistance years. This lessened his fame and, unfairly, diminished the memory of his importance.

Lévy, an army lieutenant when France fell in 1940, was a key player in unifying the diverse strands of the Resistance. He aligned himself neither with Gaullists nor communists. Eschewing politics after the liberation of France, he spent the last 50 years of his life in administrative jobs.

As Gilles — his *nom de guerre* — he founded a resistance group, France-Liberté, around Lyon and Saint-Etienne in November 1940. At first, he centred on helping Britons and French patriots escape to London. Later, he led sabotage missions in southern France.

By the end of 1941, he had founded an underground newspaper, Franc-Tireur which lent its name to one of the leading resistance movements. Based in Avignon from January 1942, he worked closely with Jean Moulin, who had been appointed by General de Gaulle to co-ordinate resistance groups, and with the British intelligence service. Dodging the Vichy police, his recruits ranged from pamphleteers to moles.

So successful was he that Moulin asked him to lead the Free French secret service. But he turned down the offer, preferring to sustain Franc-Tireur, and conciliate between De Gaulle and the leaders of the Combat and Libération resistance groups, Henri Frenay and Emmanuel d'Astier de La Vigerie.

While continuing to lead sabotage raids, he joined the joint resistance command when it was created in January 1943. Later that year he worked in London and Algiers with De Gaulle.

Arrested in January 1944 and held in Paris's top security prisons, La Santé and Fresnes, Lévy was the subject of three organised escape attempts. The third, during a transfer to the Paris law courts in June 1944, succeeded, allowing Lévy to be a major player in the planning for the liberation of Paris.

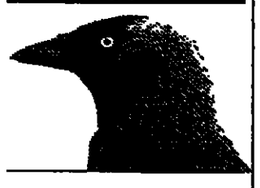
After the war, Lévy's desire for a low-profile, hands-on existence consigned him to the doldrums of industry. Rather than take a ministerial post or accept one of many lucrative chairmanships on offer to Resistance heroes, Lévy became president of the Leather Industry Guild. Later, he was foreign trade ministry civil servant. But he remained on Franc-Tireur's editorial board until 1954. By the time of his retirement in 1976, he had also had spells on the Renault and French forestry commission boards.

Typically, it was not until after his retirement that Lévy agreed to collaborate with a historian, Dominique Veillon, who for years had wanted to write his life story. The resulting book *Le Franc-Tireur* was published in 1977.

Alex Duval Smith

Jean-Pierre Lévy, Resistance leader, born May 28, 1911; died December 16, 1996

Jackdaw



Leisure lies

THOSE who hate gardening need a theory. Not-gardening without a theory is a shallow, unworthy way of life. A theory must be convincing and scientific. Yet to different people, different theories are convincing and scientific. Therefore, we need a number of theories. The alternative to not-gardening without a theory is to garden.

Marxist Theory: Capitalists try to corrupt the minds of the toiling masses and to poison them with their reactionary "values". They want to "convince" workers that gardening is a great "pleasure" and thereby keep them busy in their leisure time and prevent them from carrying out the proletarian revolution. Besides, they want to make them believe that with their miserable plot of land they are really "owners" and not wage earners and in this way win them over to the side of the owners in the class struggle. To garden is therefore to participate in the great plot aiming at the ideological deception of the masses. Do not garden!

Psychoanalytical Theory: Fondness for gardening is a typically English quality. It is easy to see why this is so. England was the first country to take part in the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution killed the natural environment. Nature is the symbol of Mother. By killing Nature, the English people committed matricide. They are unconsciously haunted by feelings of guilt, and they try to expiate their crime by cultivating and worshipping their small, pseudonatural gardens. To garden is to take part in this gigantic self-deception. You must not garden.

Existentialist Theory: People garden in order to make Nature human, to "civilize" it. This, however, is a desperate and futile attempt to transform being-in-itself into being-for-itself. This is not only ontologically impossible; it is a deceptive, morally inadmissible escape from reality, as the distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself cannot be abolished. To garden, or to imagine that one can "humanize" Nature, is to try to efface this distinction and hopelessly to deny one's own irreducibly human ontological status. To garden is to live in bad faith. Gardening is wrong.

Analytical Philosophy: In spite of many attempts, no satisfactory definitions of "garden" and of "gardening" have been found; all existing definitions leave a large area of uncertainty about what belongs where. We simply do not know what exactly a garden and gardening are. To use these concepts is therefore intellectually irresponsible, and actually to garden would be even more so.

Extract from The General Theory of Not-Gardening by Leszek Kolakowski printed in Harper's magazine. Thanks to Marianna Wright.

Cling-on

THE best thing about being the cook is that you don't have to wash up. The wife does all that, while you sit around drinking port and smoking reefers.

First of all then you need to know your kitchen. You'll find it contains more machinery than the flight deck of Concorde. The air extractor for instance, is a sort of eye-level Hoover, whose exact function is not yet fully understood, though it impresses test pilots. When turned on it sucks in rain, atmospheric dust, bees and so on and squirts lard at the neighbour's washing.

The microwave is more easily explained, despite its sci-fi looks. It's become an essential aid for the man in a hurry, but always be sure to slaughter your chicken first.

The blender will render any meal drinkable if you foul up during basting. Simply blend for an hour and serve with straws. (It's also excellent for livening up flat lager and mixing paint.) Do not try to grasp the spinning blade, tempting though it may look to the untutored eye. If a digit is mislaid, it can alter the flavour of all the food. Except moussaka. And here it's worth saying a few things about window blinds. Austrians hang straight, Festoons stay ruched, Venetians slice accurately pitched cucumbers evenly — clean them by rubbing lengthwise with an unbuttered, sliced loaf.

Clingfilm is the greatest enigma of kitchen life. Even now, in academic institutes, scientists are holding lengths of clingfilm up to the light and asking, "What is it for?"

Clingfilm is a very long thin bag with no end, a bit like Paula Yates, only less user-friendly. First you have to find the beginning. Then pull out a great long stretch and watch it all fold back on itself. Rip that bit off severing the top knuckle of your index finger on the boxes handy built-in hacksaw blade. Get another length tearing sharply downwards, pulling the entire roll out of the box and across the kitchen. Rip another length off with your teeth. Place it over the desired object and notice how it suddenly loses all its clinging quality. Throw it away.

Maxim magazine's Men in the Know advise on culinary delights.

Slimlined

Proper weight control and physical fitness cannot be attained by dieting alone.

Clingfilm . . . why?

Many people who are engaged in sedentary occupations do not realise that calories can be burned by the hundreds by engaging in strenuous activities that do not require physical exercise. Here's the guide to calorie-burning activities and the number of calories per hour they consume.

Beating around the bush — 75.

Jumping to conclusions — 100.

Throwing your weight around (depending on your weight) — 50-300.

Dragging your heels — 100.

Pushing your luck — 250.

Making mountains out of molehills — 500.

Hitting the nail on the head — 50.

Wading through paperwork — 300.

Jumping on the bandwagon — 200.

Passing the buck — 25.

Bending over backwards — 75.

Tooting your own horn — 25.

Climbing the ladder of success — 750.

Eating crow — 225.

Climbing the walls — 150.

Swallowing your pride — 50.

Pulling out the stops — 75.

Adding fuel to the fire — 160.

Wrapping it up at the day's end — 12.

To which you may want to add your own favourite activities, including:

Opening a can of worms — 50.

Putting your foot in your mouth — 300.

Starting the ball rolling — 90.

Going over the edge — 25.

Picking up the pieces after — 350.

An easier version of the post Christmas 101 horrible and impossible ways to lose weight floating around in numerous publications at the moment. Taken from the Usual Suspects listserver.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk; fax 0171-713 4366; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Emily Sheffield

من الاجل

Unions cement jobs deal, page 12

Nuclear reactors win reprieve, page 12

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
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Finance Guardian

He's with the Woolwich. He will pocket a share in this year's £20bn giveway. One snag. It could wreck economic recovery

Face in the crowd at last spring's Woolwich annual meeting. Savers and borrowers can expect £1,233 apiece in shares from the conversion windfall PHOTOGRAPH: KIPPA MATTHEWS

Rates under triple threat

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

THE City was last night bracing itself for an early rise in interest rates after the Government's first data for high-street spending over Christmas pointed to a late buying spree.

Official figures from the Bank of England showed strong demand for cash in December, fuelling expectations that borrowing costs will be increased either this month or next to choke off the growth in consumer spending — likely to be boosted by multi-billion windfall gains from building society conversions.

Some analysts said that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, may now bow to pressure from Bank governor Eddie George and raise rates at next week's monetary meeting rather than risk an increase closer to the election.

Although the strong pound is hindering the manufacturing sector, Mr George will argue that the Government's 2.5 per cent inflation target will be put in jeopardy unless swift action is taken to control consumer demand.

The Bank will point to the re-invigorated housing market, reports from retailers of buoyant trading before and after Christmas, and to the likelihood that at least part of the windfall gains from building society conversions will be spent rather than saved.

Yesterday's announcement by the Woolwich building society that it will be paying out some £3 billion to its members when it becomes a publicly-quoted company underlined that consumers can expect one-off payments totalling between £15 billion and £20 billion this year.

David Owen, analyst for Kleinwort Benson, said he expected around one-third of the windfall to be spent, and that this would add around 0.5 percentage points to consumer spending this year. However, the timing of the flotations means that the impact will not be felt until the second half of the year.

Other economists believe the overall effect could be higher. With unemployment coming down and confidence rising, they argue that consumers may be encouraged to borrow more now and cash in their shares later this year to pay off debts.

Although coming under some pressure, sterling was underpinned by market anticipation of higher interest rates. Gilts weakened amid fears that consumer-led growth in 1997 will worsen the outlook for inflation.

The short sterling contract — a guide to market expectations of interest rates in the months ahead — was pointing to base rates of 6.5 per cent in March and 7 per cent by the summer.

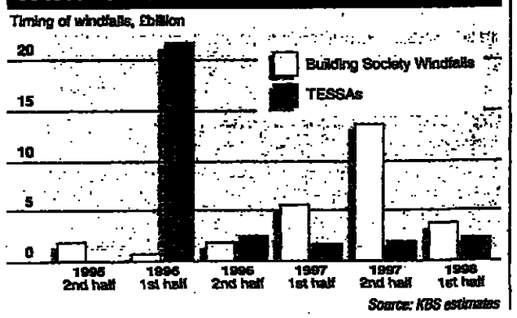
The Bank of England's figures showed that M0 — the narrow measure of the money supply — grew by 7.1 per cent in the year to December, slightly down on the 7.4 per cent expansion in the 12 months to November.

However, demand for notes and coins — the biggest component of M0 — remained robust last month. It rose by 0.7 per cent, leaving the annual growth rate unchanged at 7.4 per cent for the third month.

Jonathan Loynes, analyst with HSBC Greenwell, said the week-by-week breakdown supported anecdotal evidence of the first three weeks in December witnessing modest growth in retail sales followed by a "last-minute pre-Christmas rush in sales".

Windfalls

Timing of windfalls, £billion



Source: KBS estimates

No 3 building society set to become no 71 UK company

Richard Miles

THE Woolwich, Britain's third-largest building society, is expected to shoot straight into the top 100 listed companies when it floats on the stock market in July.

Forecasting a market valuation of between £2.96 billion and £3.38 billion, the society says it will rank 71st in the FTSE 100 index, based on figures at the Stock Exchange's close of business on December 20.

Entry to the index will bring an automatic boost to Woolwich shares, as index-tracker funds and many of the main pension funds will be compelled by their investment principles to buy the stock heavily.

The Halifax, the biggest lender with 2.5 million borrowers, plans to pip Woolwich to the Stock Exchange with its flotation in June and is guaranteed to enter the FTSE 100. With an expected valuation of close to £12 billion, the Halifax will hold a commanding position within the top 15 companies, ahead of its arch-rival Abbey National, which converted to a bank in 1989, and above the NatWest bank.

Alliance & Leicester will also make it into the index, with its £2.8 billion valuation. But Northern Rock, the fourth building society planning conversion this year, will not make the grade, with a capital worth of just over £1 billion.

John Stewart, Woolwich chief executive, said that a market listing would allow the society to expand more rapidly in other financial sectors and abroad.

But growth by acquisition may be hampered by the enactment of the Building Societies Bill published in December. This will strip a converted building society of its five-year protection from predators if it seeks to buy another financial services institution.

"We will have to play it carefully, weighing the benefits of acquisition against the loss of protection. Remember that over the past 10 years we have grown our asset base from £8 billion to £30 billion," Mr Stewart said. The society is believed to have held informal talks with several medium-sized life assurance companies, but without success.

Notebook

Mutual benefit in the euro option

Edited by Alex Brummer

THE Woolwich transfer document is the first of many to tumble on to the doormats of buildings society and mutual insurance company members this year. When the process is done with, sometime this summer, the UK financial sector will be transformed by a group of novice PLCs fighting for market share and, what is more important from the stock market view, the attention of analysts.

In some respects it is surprising that the Woolwich has reached this far. After the Peter Robinson affair last spring, it looked ripe for early pickings as a leadership vacuum built up, now resolved with the elevation of John Stewart — a level-headed Scot — to group chief executive.

Certainly, from the members and borrowers point of view, the outcome is probably the best that could be hoped for. With the notable exception of the disabled, whose payout again looks vulnerable, the Woolwich offer to members looks a reasonable compromise between the Alliance & Leicester's flat payment and the Cheltenham & Gloucester's no upper-limit payout. Under the scheme, the average member stands to collect £1,233 worth of shares — with an upper-limit of £5,000 for those with the biggest cash holdings.

That, of course, may not be the end to the gains. No one is suggesting that the Woolwich shares will ever achieve the high levels of the Abbey National, which was given away too cheaply.

However, with a market capitalisation of £3 billion, making it the 71st company in the FTSE, a publicly quoted Woolwich looks a likely takeover candidate. Having avoided being swallowed when it was at its weakest, it may fancy its survival chances now. But a lesser degree of consent is necessary once it becomes a PLC, with the Prudential and BAT (always in the frame) seen as possible buyers.

On its own, the Woolwich would like to build on its areas of strength, which include units trusts and general insurance, but also the French and Italian mortgage markets. Life would certainly be easier for the new Woolwich inside European monetary union rather than outside. Unlike some other UK financial groups it has at least set its sights beyond Britain's high streets: for that it deserves credit.

Emerging risks

A STREAM of private sector funds flowing into the emerging market economies appears to know no bounds. New data from the Basle-based Bank for International Settlements show that by midway through last year there had been unprecedented inflows of funds totalling $80.7 billion (£38 billion).

By far the largest amount of this lending was by the European banks, which accounted for 60 per cent of the increase, taking their market share to 53.8 per cent. The US share also increased but lending by Japanese banks has been on the decline.

Not surprisingly, it was the Pacific economies which attracted the most funds, although Latin America and eastern Europe also attracted big inflows. There were, however, net withdrawals from the Middle East and African regions.

The trend to higher private sector lending to emerging markets has two important consequences. It points again to the increasing irrelevance of the World Bank as a major lender to the developing world, except in those regions, such as Africa, where funds are not available elsewhere. That is why World Bank money is best targeted at reducing poverty, assisting women in development and environmental lending — all of which are less commercially attractive.

Secondly, it points to an area of risk for the global banking system. As was seen in Mexico in late 1994, the situation in emerging markets can turn on a five pence piece. Emerging markets need to be wary of substituting external capital for domestically generated investment.

Mobile blues

MOBILE phone operators are creating expectations which are difficult to fulfil. It is all very well announcing record numbers of customers, as all four network operators have done in the past few days, but it is an entirely different matter keeping them all satisfied.

One of the most frequent complaints made by customers is that they cannot connect to the network when they really need to.

The industry, guided by Oftel, has taken to reporting coverage only in terms of population covered.

However, customers have come to believe that an operator's claim to cover, say, 98 per cent of the UK population means that they can make a mobile phone call from almost anywhere in the country.

The reality is very different. A network covering 98 per cent of the population may cover less than 70 per cent of the UK land mass.

The operators should include geographic as well as population coverage in their figures as a matter of course. The discrepancy between the two would signal to potential customers that mobile phone networks are far from ubiquitous.

In addition, the operators should not write off large parts of the country because population density is too low. As mobile phones become increasingly commonplace, so must the ability to use them anywhere.

Epic battle looming over Empire State Building

Ian Katz in New York

THE Empire State Building has been at the centre of some epic fictional battles in its time but none as fierce as the one about to break out over which company runs it.

The death of Harry Helmsley, the one-time office boy who became a real estate billionaire, is expected to trigger a no-holds-barred struggle for control of Helmsley-Spear, the $1.7 billion (£1 billion) real estate empire he built.

Mr Helmsley's widow, Leona, the self-styled hotel queen of New York, who has controlled the company in recent years, faces a challenge from her husband's two former partners Alvin Schwartz, 85, and Irving Schneider, 76, who claim she has been looting assets.

Ms Helmsley ordered the lights on the top of the Empire State Building switched off to mourn the passing of her husband, who died in Scottsdale, Arizona, aged 87.

The Empire State is one of several hundred prime buildings partly owned and managed by Helmsley-Spear. Mr Helmsley also owned a chain of 27 hotels run by his wife.

Once doyens of New York society, the Helmsleys fell from grace after they were indicted in 1988 for tax evasion. Mr Helmsley avoided prosecution because of ill-health but his wife served 18 months of a four-year sentence for ducking more than $1.2 million in taxes.

Raytheon's £1.8bn lands target

Mark Tran in New York

RAYTHEON, maker of the Patriot missile, yesterday bolstered its position in the rapidly shrinking American arms industry by buying Texas Instruments' defence electronics division for $2.95 billion (£1.8 billion) in cash.

The move was seen as a prelude to attempts by Raytheon to acquire even bigger targets as Hughes Electronics, a unit of General Motors, prepares to auction off defence holdings valued at $9 billion.

The Hughes sale will cap a tumultuous four-year period of consolidation in the US arms industry following the end of the cold war.

After a flurry of mergers, the industry looks set to be dominated by a handful of companies that will pose a formidable challenge to their smaller European rivals.

The Raytheon deal comes hard on last month's $14 billion purchase of McDonnell Douglas by Boeing.

Raytheon, which owns a troubled plant in Wales, operates four diverse business units: electronics, aircraft, engineering and construction, and appliances. While sales to the Pentagon have declined from 90 per cent of total sales to roughly a third since 1987, Raytheon is determined to remain in the front line of defence contractors.

In the past two years, it has made two other big purchases — E-Systems, a maker of reconnaissance equipment, for $2.3 billion in 1995 and Chrysler's defence electronics business for $475 million last year.

The company's latest purchase will boost its total annual sales to more than $15 billion and make it the second-biggest arms maker behind Lockheed Martin.

"We have consistently said that we will remain a top-tier player in the defence industry. We are buying a growing, world-class business that competes successfully in several key defence electronics markets where Raytheon is not a significant participant," said Dennis Picard, Raytheon's chairman and chief executive.

The company is known for its expertise in air-to-air and ship defence missile systems. Apart from the Patriot anti-missile system used in the Gulf war, Raytheon makes Hawk, Sidewinder and Sparrow missiles.

Texas Instruments Defence Systems & Electronics Group, based in Lewisville, Texas, employs about 12,000 people and specialises in precision-guided weapons such asthe High Speed Anti-Radiation Missile (Harm), used extensively in the Gulf war.

Orange leads mobile phone surge

Nicholas Bannister
Technology Editor

MOBILE phone users in Britain jumped to a record 6.81 million during 1996, with digital phones accounting for more than half the market for the first time.

The four network operators — Vodafone, Cellnet, Orange and One 2 One — signed up a further 1.42 million net new customers during the year.

The improvement was achieved even though the companies, on average, are losing about one customer in four every year. The customer losses, known as churn, are high for a service industry, though some of the operators claim that there is an underlying churn level of about 18 per cent caused by people dying, moving house or job, or no longer being able to afford a mobile phone.

The digital market has grown rapidly in recent years as a result of the arrival of Orange and One 2 One, which only offer digital services. However Vodafone and Cellnet are encouraging customers to switch to their digital network from the analogue networks, which are due to close by 2005. By the end of the year the number of digital subscribers had risen to 3.43 million, while analogue subscribers had slumped by 600,000 to 3.37 million.

Orange, which yesterday announced that its customer base had more than doubled to 406,000, is confident that there will be about 12 million mobile phone users by the end of the century. However Vodafone is more cautious, putting the figure at between 10 million and 11 million.

Orange director Graham Howe said the group expected to benefit during the year from the start of number portability for mobile phone customers, possibly by the middle of the year, and from the introduction of handsets with the ability to use either of the two mobile phone frequencies used in Europe.

The group has invested during the year to expand its network which now covers 92 per cent of the UK population.

Mobile business in 1996

Network operator	Subscribers at year end	Increase during year	4th quarter net growth
Vodafone	2,800,000	468,000	146,000
Cellnet	2,680,000	380,000	143,000
Orange	785,000	406,000	125,000
One 2 One	545,000	170,000	85,000

News in brief

Prestige sacks 220 staff

Prestige, the Burnley-based kitchenware manufacturer, has cut almost two-thirds of its 330 workforce after it was forced to call in receivers on New Year's Eve. The cuts followed the loss of 80 jobs last Thursday, leaving just 115 staff. The cuts are to get the company into shape to find a buyer for the business, said a spokeswoman.

Cut-throat life battle

A number of British life insurance companies are pursuing unprofitable new business in an attempt to grab market share and push prices below the reach of smaller competitors, according to a report by credit rating agency Moody's.

The report says mutually-owned companies are likely to need stronger partners if they are to compete effectively, and it concludes that further consolidation is likley in the sector.

King of the desert

Burger King, the fast-food chain owned by Grand Metropolitan, announced plans yesterday to open at least 20 franchised restaurants this year in Kuwait — the 58th country in which it will have a presence. The outlets will serve only Halal meat and chicken products.

Hertz grip challenged

Hertz's position as America's biggest car rental company will come under threat after Republic Industries, owned by billionaire Wayne Huizenga, agreed yesterday to buy National Car Rental for $600 million (£375 million).

Shareholders give Wickes the nod to rebuild finances

Lisa Buckingham

WICKES, the crisis ridden DIY retailer, yesterday won shareholder backing for a life-saving capital restructuring which opened the way for its shares to resume trading this morning for the first time since they were suspended at 69p in June.

The refinancing is designed to put Wickes back on an even keel after years of accounting irregularities but analysts are predicting that the company will be lucky to escape takeover.

The market says Wickes could attract a price of about £200 million although the company may have to absorb losses of up to £56 million on sales of £450 million from its 122 British stores for last year.

The DIY retailer, whose former management is under investigation, admitted it would collapse without a rights issue to rebuild its finances following discovery of a £42 million fraud.

An extraordinary meeting of shareholders yesterday agreed to a package which included a £58 million rights issue, a capital reduction and £52 million in new banking facilities.

Chairman Michael von Brentano said Wickes was in negotiations to sell its Continental operations — which it has threatened to close if a buyer cannot be found. It is understood that several Continentals retailer are interested in the 39 stores Wickes owns in Belgium, the Netherlands and France.

Details of the financial reconstruction were announced last year in an effort to restore shareholder confidence in the company whose former executives are alleged to have overstated profits during a period of several years.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.08	France 8.71	Italy 2,560	Singapore 2.3270
Austria 18.19	Germany 2.5870	Malta 0.5620	South Africa 7.79
Belgium 53.50	Greece 410.00	Netherlands 2.9050	Spain 217.50
Canada 2.27	Hong Kong 12.79	New Zealand 2.33	Sweden 11.63
Cyprus 0.7695	India 60.71	Norway 10.83	Switzerland 2.2350
Denmark 9.92	Ireland 0.9850	Portugal 260.00	Turkey 177,729
Finland 7.89	Israel 5.50	Saudi Arabia 6.32	USA 1.6575

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

The Guardian Tuesday January 7 1997

Labour presents deal cemented with Blue Circle as model for the future

Ross Dunn (right), Blue Circle's personnel director, and Roger Davies, a driver at the firm for 24 years, mark the ground-breaking pay and job security deal announced yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: TONY HARRIS

Unions trade pay for jobs

David Gow

BLUE CIRCLE and two of Britain's biggest unions yesterday unveiled a continental-style deal offering employees five years of job security in return for pay restraint and flexible working practices.

The deal struck by the cement company with the GMB general union and TGWU transport union was hailed by Labour as a "ground-breaking" agreement. It said such "social partnership", tackling the core issue of job insecurity, should become a model for future employer-employee relations.

It mirrors long-standing arrangements in Europe, particularly in Germany's highly regulated labour market, under which firms and unions sign long-term deals covering pay, hours and working practices. Europe's biggest union, IG Metall, last year proposed a national "alliance for jobs and growth" under which increased employment would be traded for pay moderation and greater flexibility at the workplace.

For Labour, yesterday's deal is evidence that pay may be becoming secondary to job security. An incoming Blair government hopes to avert an explosion of pent-up pay demands, especially in the public sector, by making job security the core issue.

Allan Black, GMB national secretary, said: "The pressure from our members is on job security, not pay. This reflects a change of emphasis over the past few years."

The settlement initially covers only 124 distribution drivers employed by the company who are to get a 3 per cent pay rise from this month, along with a one-off £200 payment and a one-hour cut in the working week.

Next year they will face a pay freeze, with pay levels in the last three years of the five-year deal determined by a joint review body. The settlement will produce significant annual savings for Blue Circle, which has agreed there will be no more contracting out of haulage and no compulsory redundancies among drivers in the five-years.

If approved by GMB delegates tomorrow, a deal covering about 2,000 process workers and other staff will offer pay increases worth the official inflation rate plus 0.25 per cent for the next 3 years, with a commitment to continue on an annual basis.

Clocking-on will cease to exist under a shake-up of working practices that should eradicate the difference between blue- and white-collar staff conditions, while Blue Circle has agreed there will be no compulsory redundancies and extensive retraining.

In exchange, said Mr Black, Blue Circle will get guaranteed increases in productivity. The drivers' deal alone will save £1.2 million a year, according to Ross Dunn, Blue Circle personnel director.

Mr Black said the deal, which took 12 months to negotiate, had prompted other firms to consider a similar approach. "Some companies are already experiencing skill shortages — if they want to secure their workforce for the future then they should be establishing deals to compete with Blue Circle."

Peter Hain, a Labour employment spokesman, said: "In government Labour will encourage such agreements because we want business to think long-term and focus upon jobs, skills and flexibility as the best passport for Britain's economic success."

He added: "Since job insecurity is the curse of the British labour market, from the highest manager to the lowest cleaner, what we need to do to get a long-term perspective is to encourage these social-partnership deals."

Old nuclear reactors win a reprieve

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

BRITISH Energy's two oldest nuclear power stations have been given approval to run for another 10 years by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

The newly privatised company could have faced a crisis if its stations had hit licensing difficulties so soon after its stock market debut last summer.

The advanced gas-cooled reactors at Hinkley Point B in Somerset and Hunterston B in the Firth of Clyde were licensed for 20 years when they started up in 1976. All seven AGR stations, including the industry's worst performer, Dungeness in Kent, are having to go through the same procedure.

Some of the older Magnox stations, which are still in the public sector, have been given lifespan extensions to 40 years, taking them to twice their original design life. Others have already been closed down because the the inspectorate was not happy with safety measures.

The inspectors imposed such stringent extra safety precautions that the old Nuclear Electric company decided the capital expenditure required to bring them up to standard was not worthwhile.

How long the AGRs can continue before British Energy is faced with the same decisions is unknown but it is thought unlikely that they will reach the age of 40. The 10-year extension is subject to annual reviews in case any new life-limiting factor is discovered.

British Energy's desire will be to keep all the stations operational, as the closure of even one would damage the company balance sheet. So far British Energy has been able to defer and discount the liabilities for post-closure clean-upsto some unknown future date, but this accountancy trick would not be available if even one station had to close.

John Large, a nuclear engineer who was involved in the AGR design, said he thought the first closure would be sooner that 10 years. "I am a fan of the AGR design but we have already had faults associated with ageing at these stations, including corroded standpipes which have to be replaced.

"The life-limiting factors include the expansion and change in shape of the graphite blocks inside the reactor and stress on the concrete pressure vessels of turning the reactors on and off."

Giordano takes pay cut

Lisa Buckingham

THE pressure for change at the top of British Gas receded yesterday after it emerged that Sir Michael Perry, the respected former boss of Unilever, is to head part of the company and that the chairman, Dick Giordano, will accept a 50 per cent pay cut.

Shares in British Gas initially rose but then fell back 4½p to 225½p as the market digested Sir Michael's impending appointment at Centrica, the household gas business, soon to be spun off. "He is not a particularly obvious choice," said one shareholder, "but he is very, very able and well used to running a large organisation."

Investors said they were now prepared to give Mr Giordano up to two years as chairman of BG's pipelines business, although one said it was still desirable that he should be sacrificed for his role in the damaging controversy over boardroom salaries.

Mr Giordano, who also steered BG through the disclosure of its costly take-or-pay fuel contracts, has now indicated he will step aside from the helm of Centrica following demerger, rather than holding on for up to a year.

And, after the fracas over the pay rise given to former chief executive Cedric Brown, it appears Mr Giordano wants shareholders to know the reduction in his role will be reflected in his salary.

At present, Mr Giordano, who is a non-executive chairman, earns £450,000 a year. This is expected to drop by more than £200,000, although British Gas yesterday declined to comment before the publication on Friday of Centrica's listing particulars.

A senior investment expert said: "Long term it is inappropriate that Giordano should stay. But he must see through the demerger."

Trial of tycoon to bring sleaze claims

Ian Traynor in Bonn

ALMOST THREE years after fleeing abroad to avoid the courts and creditors after the collapse of his DM5 billion (£1.9 billion) property empire, Juergen Schneider, the king of Germany's post-unification building boom, was yesterday charged with multiple counts of fraud.

Frankfurt prosecutors said the 62-year-old tycoon is to be tried for credit and bankruptcy fraud, and his wife, Claudia, for bankruptcy fraud, in post-war Germany's biggest property scandal.

The trial will open a window on the corruption and sleaze gnawing away at Germany's post-unification business culture. While an outraged public will greedily consume the details of Schneider's fraud, some of the most prestigious names in German banking are likely to be embarrassed by the courtroom revelations.

In the wake of unification in 1990, the former bricklayer and business school graduate turned property developer embarked on a spree of purchases in Berlin, east Germany and Frankfurt, allegedly using fraudulent means to obtain hundreds of millions of pounds in bank loans until the bubble burst in 1994. The couple fled to the US, leaving debts of £2 billion and scores of creditors.

The charge sheet alleges that, before he fled, Schneider funnelled almost £100 million into Swiss bank accounts as his empire crumbled.

After almost two years on the run, he was extradited from the US last February, since when he has been in custody pending trial.

Deutsche Bank, Germany's biggest commercial bank and Schneider's main creditor, was instrumental in triggering the scandal by pulling the plug on his credit. Schneider's defence will focus on presenting the tycoon as the gullible victim of the omnipotent German banking system and is threatening potentially embarrassing disclosures on the operations of Deutsche.

Juergen Schneider on his return from the US in February

Oil explorers set to go way of car industry

Outlook
Patrick Donovan

BRITAIN'S independent oil exploration sector looks set to be consigned to history. There are now fewer UK quoted companies drilling for hydrocarbons than before the discovery of North Sea oil more than 25 years ago. If Clyde Petroleum is taken over by Gulf Canada Resources yet another name will be lost to a business once hyped as the saviour of the British economy.

Just a decade ago Britain boasted one of the most active independent exploration sectors outside the US. Such was the level of investor enthusiasm that during the eighties a growing number of US companies chose to trade their shares in London rather than New York.

We do still have world-ranking firms: British Petroleum, along with the smaller operators, Lasmo and Enterprise. Among the second division operators, there remain names like Premier and Goal. But what happened to the myriad smaller operators which used to drill oil from Aberdeen to Abu Dhabi?

Britoil was swallowed up by BP in 1987, Tricentrol was bought by US-based Arco, IC Gas was taken over by a continental predator, Ultramar was taken out by a home-grown bid from Lasmo, as was Acre Oil, and the former Cluff Oil is now more accurately described as a minerals and mining concern.

Clyde, along with Premier Oil, is the rump of what was one of the most dynamic sectors on the London market. Of course the shares were speculative — that was the nature of the business. But the reassuring thing about oil shares was that they were buoyed up by North Sea oil.

It was a bonanza which fostered one of the most exciting periods in the evolution of offshore techniques. The development of the continental shelf pushed the limits of conventional technology back so far that it looked as if British oil companies and their associated suppliers could lead the way in one of the world's most lucrative industries.

Britain did need the help of the US oil majors to fund the North Sea's development. But in exchange successive governments promised that production licences for foreign companies would be made conditional on "technology transfer" deals — only granting permission to produce oil for foreign companies prepared to make a meaningful investment in building up Britain's indigenous oil technology.

But this never happened. Despite all these government promises, attempts to build up a UK offshore industry based on North Sea oil have largely fizzled out.

Instead, this once proud sector has been steadily whittled away by predominantly overseas buyers.

This will be to Britain's detriment, both in the development of what remains of North Sea production and the exploitation of opportunities overseas, most notably in the gas markets of the Pacific Rim.

Takeover of Clyde will be another step in this direction although it looks as though the company is unlikely to be bought out without Gulf cranking up its offer from the current price of £432 million.

We are in the process of seeing a large part of Britain's expertise in the world of offshore technology going the way of the country's car industry.

Newbury protesters carry fight to the City

Tony May

PROTESTERS against the Newbury bypass clashed with security guards in the City yesterday as they tried to rush the podium at an extraordinary general meeting of Costain, the troubled construction group which is building the road.

Opponents of the bypass bought shares in the company in order to pursue their protest at shareholders' meetings.

This year they failed to reach their target — Dr Azman Firdaus Shafii — who took over as chairman last week from Sir Christopher Benson, who left the company along with most of the old board.

At an EGM last year, protesters succeeded in storming the podium and prevented Dr Azman, formerly a joint deputy chairman, from giving a presentation.

Their cause won some sympathy yesterday from Alistair Stark, chairman of the Costain Independent Shareholders Association, who has been urging shareholders to cut their losses and run.

He said: "The company is obviously in serious trouble. The idea that they are going to make profits out of an outdated scheme such as the Newbury bypass, is antiquated and unrealistic.

"I also sympathise with those shareholders who have loyally held their shares for 10 or 15 years and have now lost thousands of pounds due to poor management of the company."

Dr Shafii took charge of Costain after last year saw overseas investors put cash into the group to keep it solvent. He is vice-chairman of Intria, the Malaysian company which holds 40 per cent of Costain's shares. The other main shareholders are Kharafi, a Kuwaiti firm of builders and Raymond International of Saudi Arabia.

The meeting easily outvoted protesters to approve the raising of a minimum of £5.4 million through yet another share issue, this time to Henry Luhur, an Indonesian industrialist.

Kharafi will also buy some of the shares to prevent its 25.35 per cent stake from being diluted.

The only mouthrinse that will keep on working for up to 12 hours.

Classic team . . . Major Dick Hern greets Willie Carson and Nashwan after their victory in the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket PHOTOGRAPH: ED BYRNE

Carson under orders for the final time

Chris Hawkins looks back on the career of the brilliant jockey who will hang up his riding boots at the end of the 1997 Flat season

WILLIE CARSON, 54, has confirmed that the coming Flat season will be his last; a decision fully expected since a kick from a horse lacerated his liver at Newbury last September.

He has not ridden in public since but the lure of partnering Bahhare, the ante-post favourite for the 2,000 Guineas, has induced him to carry on a little longer.

"Most of the Classics come early on. Once they are over I will take a view," said Carson. "Fitness is always a problem for jockeys and, let's face it, the clock is ticking which is why I can't see any farther than this year."

Apart from Frankie Dettori, there is no more popular rider than Carson whose commitment during a career spanning 37 years has been there for all to see. Five championships, over 3,500 winners and 14 English Classics, including four Derbys, speak eloquently of his ability.

Where that ability came from no one really knows. It was certainly not bred into him like Dettori, Lester Piggott or Pat Eddery and his origins were thoroughly Scottish working class.

Born and brought up in Stirling just a few streets away from Billy Bremner, another little tiger destined for sporting fame, his father, Tommy, was a warehouseman for Fyffes bananas while his mother, May, worked as a waitress.

From an early age Billy, as he was called at home, was instilled with the work ethic and as a nine-year-old he started doing a paper round for 12s 6d a week.

Ten shillings of that went on riding lessons as he cycled the nine-mile round trip to Mrs MacFarlane's at Dunblane, inspired by the film "The Rainbow Jacket" about a young boy becoming a jockey and winning the Derby. Any cinema illusions that racing was an exciting, magical world were swiftly shattered, however, when at 16 he left home to become apprenticed to Captain Gerald Armstrong at Middleham.

He hated it and wrote pleading to be allowed home but his mother would have none of it. He had to see it through she said and so it is thanks to May that fortune eventually came his way.

He had no meteoric rise to the top and it took him seven seasons before he rode 100 winners although the transfer of his indentures from Gerald to brother Sam Armstrong at Newmarket proved crucial.

"Gerald told me Carson was a good lad, definitely above average," commented Sam later. "He said it would be a crying shame to let him drift out of racing."

His career can be divided into two halves; the years before and after he joined Dick Hern.

Prior to his wonderful association with the Major at West Ilsley he rode mainly for Newmarket trainers and Bernard van Cutsem, for whom he won the 1972 2,000 Guineas on High Top, in particular.

It might have been a long and productive partnership but van Cutsem died of cancer in 1975 and two years later Carson, rather surprisingly, ousted Joe Mercer as stable jockey to Hern.

It was a controversial move at the behest of Lord Weinstock, a powerful owner in the yard, who was quoted at the time as saying: "He's the kind of man for me, a man who fights to win."

Weinstock certainly appreciated Carson's greatest quality and so too, quite quickly, did the Queen for whom the jockey won the Oaks on Dunfermline in that first year.

"To ride a Classic winner for the Queen in her Jubilee year is the greatest day of my life," said Carson at the time, but there were many great days to come and one or two genuinely great horses.

The easy Derby winner Troy was one of them but for Carson the best was Nashwan who won the 2,000 Guineas, Derby, Eclipse and the King George in 1989.

"He was the one," said Carson. "He had more speed than Troy, who could never have won the 2,000 Guineas."

The colt gave Hern his first Classic after the hunting fall which condemned him to a wheelchair and Carson's delight for the Major was clearly evident in the winner's enclosure that day.

Nashwan was owned by Hamdan Al Maktoum, another highly significant figure in Carson's life, who later retained him to ride all his horses, bringing further Classic success with Salsabil, Shadayid and Erhaab.

That Carson is a superb, totally determined rider is not in question. He is not universally popular out of the saddle, however, for despite his successful life style — he flies his own plane and has his own Stud — he can be hard (particularly on his own family), overly sensitive and prone to get down in the dumps.

But maybe these are simply characteristics of the highly motivated; people who are seldom happy with what they have achieved, always striving for greater success and a bigger bank balance.

This "other side" may surprise some who have only seen him on television as a fun character, forever ready with a quip and a cackle.

But when Carson passes through the weighing room door for the final time he will assuredly be missed by the racing public who always love a trier.

Never a believer in whipping his horses, he has nevertheless always got the last ounce of effort from his mounts. Fighting to win will certainly be a fitting epitaph to a great career.

Wolverhampton to the rescue

Chris Hawkins

THE British Horseracing Board yesterday sanctioned an additional all-weather fixture at Wolverhampton this Saturday and more meetings — both jumping and all-weather — are in the pipeline to make up for recent losses.

Since the beginning of November, 51 jump meetings have been abandoned and only seven additional fixtures have been granted.

But a BHB spokesman said: "The situation is being closely monitored and, depending on the granting of funds from the Levy Board, there will be some more jump meetings put into the programme."

Channel 4 will cover the Wolverhampton meeting if the jumping card at Warwick is called off.

Andrew Franklin, the programme's producer, said: "Should Warwick be called off by lunchtime on Friday it would give us time to switch to Wolverhampton." Channel 4 will also be covering The Ladbroke Hurdle at Leopardstown.

Prospects for the rest of this week's jumping programme are poor. Tomorrow's card at Plumpton was called off yesterday, while Kelso is expected to go the same way after an inspection this morning.

Once again Lingfield is left to fly the flag this afternoon when Sooty Tern (3.00) is napped in the Warspite Handicap.

This course and distance winner is still sprightly at the age of ten and ran well at Wolverhampton on Saturday when seond to Leigh Crofter over seven furlongs. The extra 220 yards here will be in his favour.

Apollo Red (3.30), from the in-form stable of Charlie Moore, was another in action over the weekend, finishing fourth to Royal Carlton at Lingfield. He made the running but faded and tackles a furlong shorter trip in the Repulse Handicap.

The Carson fact file

Born: November 16, 1942, in Stirling, Scotland.

Married: to Elaine. Three sons, Anthony, Neil and Ross.

First winner: Pinkers Pond, Catterick, July 19, 1962.

First century: 1971. Repeated the feat every year but two.

Champion jockey: 1972, 1973, 1978, 1980 and 1983.

Best season: 1990 (187 winners).

Most winners at a meeting: 3,246-1 six-timer at Newcastle June 30, 1990.

English Classic wins (14): 1000 Guineas with Salsabil (1990) and Shadayid (1991); 2000 Guineas with High Top (1972), Known Fact (1980), Don't Forget Me (1987), Nashwan (1989); Derby with Troy (1979), Henbit (1980), Nashwan (1989), Erhaab (1994). Oaks with Dunfermline (1977), Bireme (1980), Sun Princess (1983), Salsabil (1990), Shadayid (1991); St Leger with Dunfermline (1977), Sun Princess (1983) and Minster Son (1988).

Best horses ridden: Dayjur, Nashwan, Troy, Sun Princess.

Lingfield all-weather Flat card with guide to the form

1.00 Nothing Doing
1.30 Misty Cay
2.00 Nopalea
2.30 Double Espresso
3.00 SOOTY TERN (nap)
3.30 Apollo Red (nb)

Draw: Low numbers favoured. Going: Standard. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest outing

1.00 HOOD SELLING HANDICAP 1m 5f £2,155

101	268852-	SUPREME STAR (33) P Hedger 6-10-0	D O'Neill 7★
102	6/50040-	DRAGON GREEN (8) J Cullinan 6-8-10	T Sprake 10
103	673000-	BRAVE SPY (35) C Cyzer 6-8-8	G Carter 6
104	335/560-	MR BEAN (34) K Burke 7-8-8	S Sanders 1★
105	30440-6	AL HELAL (4) J Jenkins 5-8-4	D Harrison 8★
106	000826-	MAPENGO (13) J Cullinan 6-8-1	V Slattery 3
107	002265-	SWEET AMORET (9) P Howling 4-8-8	F Norton 9
108	250205-	ROSE OF GLENN (24) (C) B Palling 6-8-11	C Rutter 13
109	553050-	EFFICACIOUS (15) A Moore 4-8-10	A Clark 4
110	516234-	NOTHING DOING (15) W Musson 8-8-3	J Quinn 5
111	652054/0-	PERSIAN BUD (57) J Bosley 9-8-8	R Perham 11★
112	00/00/-	TENNYSON BAY (614) Jamie Poulton 5-8-0	G Bardwell 12
113	000600-	EMBROIDERED (97) R Flower 4-7-11	M Varley (3) 2

13 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Supreme Star 8, Nothing Doing 7, Rose Of Glenn 6

1996: Sedsky 4 8 0 J Quinn 20-1 (B Smithy) 14 ran

Betting: 5-2 Nothing Doing, 7-2 Supreme Star, 5-1 Sweet Amoret, 8-1 Rose Of Glenn, 12-1 Al Helal, Efficacious, Dragon Green.

FORM GUIDE – NOTHING DOING: Held up, headway 5f out, stayed on final furlong, 4th of 10, 12l behind Wottashambles (Lingfield 2m hcp).
SUPREME STAR: Chased leader 10f until 3f out, one pace, 3rd of 12, 13l behind Matthias Mystique (Lingfield 2m).
SWEET AMORET: Led until approaching final furlong, 8th of 14, 4½l behind Arcatura (Lingfield 1m 2f sell).
ROSE OF GLENN: Led after 2f until over 5f out, soon lost touch, 5th of 9, 28l behind Pensskip (Wolverhampton 1m 6f 166yds sell).
AL HELAL: Headway 4f out, kept on final 2l, 6th of 14, 6l behind Sarasi (Southwell 1m 3f sell).
EFFICACIOUS: Chased leaders, weakened over 1f out, 7th of 9, 23l behind Weirlid Bench (Lingfield 1m 2f claimer).
DRAGON GREEN: 16-1 headway 5f out, weakened over 2f out, 10th of 14, 15l behind Arcatura at Lingfield 1m2f sell stks(F) (AWT) std.

1.30 WINDSOR CLAIMING STAKES 3YO 7f £2,766

201	01405-4	BEN'S RIDGE (8) (D) P Haslam 8-6	G Carter 3★
202	66034-	BROADGATE FLYER (19) Mrs L Stubbs 8-9	S Sanders 5
203	064035-	MASTERSTROKE (27) B Meehan 8-7	Dane O'Neill 2
204	58304-1	MISTY CAY (8) (C) (D) S Dow 8-6	A Daly (5) 4
205	03204-	WINDBORN (8) C Allen 8-0	M Baird (3) 1

5 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Misty Cay 10, Ben's Ridge 8

1996: Ultra Barley 3 9 0 M Baird 10-11 (P Makin) 7 ran

Betting: 7-4 Misty Cay, 11-4 Ben's Ridge, 3-1 Masterstroke, 8-1 Broadgate Flyer, Windborn.

FORM GUIDE – MISTY CAY: Headway 4f out, led over 1f out, ran on well, beat Sefenade 2l (Lingfield 1m claimer).
BEN'S RIDGE: Held up, ridden 2f out, weakened over 1f out, 4th of 5, 7l behind Effervescence (Lingfield 7f hcp).
MASTERSTROKE: Headway over 3f out, ridden, one pace, 5th of 10, 4l behind Cee-N-K (Lingfield 1m hcp).
BROADGATE FLYER: Ran on when 4th of 13, btn 10l, to Master Foley (Wolverhampton 6f sell).
WINDBORN: Slowly into stride, led after 1f, headed well over 1f out, faded, last of 5, 8l behind The Wyandotte Inn (Lingfield 7f).

2.00 VICTORY MEDIAN AUCTION MAIDEN STAKES 3YO 6f £2,406

301	4665-	HARMONY IN RED (69) C Dwyer 9-0	M Wigham 2
302	3405-	INCATIME (7) C James 9-0	C Rutter 1★
303	652054-	EKATERINI PARITSI (7) W Turner 8-9	T Sprake 4★
304	063-	GREEN BOULEVARD (7) J Berry 8-9	G Carter 5
305	423433-	NOPALEA (69) T Naughton 8-9	J Weaver 3

5 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Nopalea 8, Green Boulevard 7

1996: Happy Partner 3 9 0 M Tebbutt 11-8 (C Murray) 6 ran

Betting: 7-4 Nopalea, 5-2 Green Boulevard, 11-4 Ekaterini Paritsi, 5-1 Harmony In Red, 8-1 Incatime.

FORM GUIDE – NOPALEA: Chased leaders, ran on well final furlong, 3rd of 11, 10l behind Dominant Air (Yarmouth 6f 43yds hcp, Gd).
GREEN BOULEVARD: Headway 2f out, one pace inside final furlong, 3rd of 8, 4l behind Hever Golf Lover. EKATERINI PARITSI 4th, btn 6l, INCATIME 5th, btn 13l (Lingfield 5f auction).
HARMONY IN RED: Led after 1f, soon headed, ridden 2f out, soon beaten, 5th of 12, 9l behind Trailblazer (Wolverhampton 6f auction).

2.30 NELSON HANDICAP 3YO 1m 2f £3,323

401	241213-	DOUBLE ESPRESSO (43) (C) M Johnston 9-7	J Weaver 4
402	42501-	FEATHER BED (15) (C) M Jarvis 9-5	P Lynch (3) 1
403	368114-	HELLO DOLLY (27) K Burke 9-3	D Sweeney (5) 6
404	040343-	GREENWICH FORE (27) T Mills 9-2	W Ryan 3★
405	22020-1	GOING FOR BROKE (6) (5lb ex) P Haslam 9-0	S Sanders 2
406	0004-	CHATEAUHERAULT (106) P Haslam 8-3	S Drowne 5
407	11680-5	BARNWOOD CRACKERS (8) Miss Gay Kelleway 8-2	Angela Gallimore (7) 7

7 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Double Espresso 8, Going For Broke 7

1996: China Castle 3 8 13 J Fortune 7-4 (P Haslam) 11 ran

Betting: 5-2 Going For Broke, 7-2 Double Espresso, 4-1 Feather Bed, 9-2 Greenwich Fore, 5-1 Hello Dolly, 10-1 Barnwood Crackers, 16-1 Chateauherault.

FORM GUIDE – GOING FOR BROKE: Led over 2f out, clear final furlong, beat Pinchincha 4l (Southwell 1m hcp).
DOUBLE ESPRESSO: Prominent, outpaced 3f out, stayed on final furlong, 3rd of 8, 3l behind HELLO DOLLY (Wolverhampton 1m 100yds hcp).
FEATHER BED: Led over 2f out, ran on well, beat Around Fore Alliss 1l (Lingfield 1m mdn).
GREENWICH FORE: Held up, effort over 2f out, ran on one pace, 3rd of 10, 10l behind Cee-N-K, HELLO DOLLY 4th, btn 2l (Lingfield 1m hcp).
BARNWOOD CRACKERS: Weakened over 1f out, 5th of 8, 7l behind Misty Cay (Lingfield 1m claimer).
CHATEAUHERAULT: Prominent, chance over 2f out, one pace, 4th of 13, 4l behind Swallow Breeze (Nottingham 1m 2f hcp, Gd-Fm).

3.00 WARSPITE HANDICAP 1m £2,507

501	600100-	SUPERIOR FORCE (87) (CD) Miss B Sanders 4-9-11	A Whelan (3) 11
502	546252-	BAGSHOT (8) G L Moore 6-9-9	C Rutter 5
503	434606-	OBERONS BOY (27) S Dow 4-9-7	W Ryan 10
504	463031-	RAWI (8) (6lb ex) (C) Miss Gay Kelleway 4-9-5	Dane O'Neill 6
505	04252-2	SOOTY TERN (3) (CD) J Bradley 10-9-4	J Weaver 7
506	124365-	HARLEQUIN WALK (7) (C) R O'Sullivan 6-8-13	S Sanders 4
507	680006-	RED RUSTY (8) (CD) P Hedger 4-8-13	A Clark 1
508	060013-	SHANGHAI LIL (18) (CD) M Fetherston-Godley 5-8-9	F Norton 8
509	00060-5	ZANALEK (3) R Flower 5-8-6	S Drowne 3★
510	00/000-5	PRIVATE FIXTURE (3) (C) D Marks 6-8-8	T Sprake 12
511	31050-2	ZAHRAN (3) (CD) J Bradley 6-8-5	L Charnock 2
512	010002-	MOGIN (27) T Naughton 4-8-5	J D Smith (3) 9

12 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Rawi 8, Bagshot 7, Sooty Tern 6

1996: Rebellion 5 9 2 R Cochrane 11-4 (D Arbuthnot) 12 ran

Betting: 7-2 Rawi, 5-1 Sooty Tern, 6-1 Zahran, 7-1 Bagshot, 8-1 Superior Force, 10-1 Oberons Boy, Mogin.

FORM GUIDE – RAWI: Led 3f out, driven out, beat Zelaya a neck (Lingfield 7f mdn).
SOOTY TERN: Prominent, chased winner 2f out, no extra final furlong, 2nd of 8, 2l behind Leigh Crofter (Wolverhampton 7f hcp).
ZAHRAN: Prominent, went 2nd over three out, no impression, 2nd of 7, 5l behind Elite Hope (Wolverhampton 7f hcp).
BAGSHOT: Headway 4f out, every chance 1f out, ran on, 2nd of 14, 3l behind Arcatura (Lingfield 1m 2f sell).
SUPERIOR FORCE: Prominent over 4f, 21st of 24, 19l behind High Premium (Ascot 1m hcp, Gd).
OBERONS BOY: Outpaced early, headway over 1l out, never nearer, 6th of 12, 8l behind Apollo Red (Lingfield 7f hcp)
MOGIN: Headway three out, ridden over 1f out, ran on one pace, 2nd of 12, 4l behind Mr Nevermind (Lingfield 1m claimer).

3.30 REPULSE HANDICAP 6f £3,306

601	060114-	SCISSOR RIDGE (16) (CD) J Bridger 5-9-11	S Sanders 6
602	401205-	PAGEBOY (100) (CD) P Haslam 8-9-9	J Weaver 5
603	050502-	SALLY SLADE (25) C Cyzer 5-9-6	G Carter 1
604	10543-0	SEA DANZIG (3) (C) J Bridger 4-9-1	D Harrison 2
605	10011-4	APOLLO RED (8) (C) (D) A Moore 8-9-0	Candy Morris 4
606	00182-6	SHASHI (3) (D) Pat Mitchell 5-8-9	R Lappin 3

6 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Apollo Red 8, Scissor Ridge 7

1996: Chewit 4 10 0 Candy Morris 12-1 (A Moore) 13 ran

Betting: 9-4 Apollo Red, 3-1 Scissor Ridge, 7-2 Sea Danzig, 4-1 Sally Slade, 7-1 Pageboy, 10-1 Shashi.

FORM GUIDE – APOLLO RED: Led to halfway, hard ridden final 2f, one pace, 4th of 9, 5l behind Royal Carlton (Lingfield 7f hcp).
SCISSOR RIDGE: Lost place 5f out, rallied final furlong, 4th of 14, 4l behind Bold Effort (Lingfield 6f hcp).
SEA DANZIG: Chased leader, soon ridden along, weakened 2f out, last of 8, 9l behind Step On Degas (Lingfield 7f hcp).
SALLY SLADE: Ran on well, 2nd of 10, 1½l behind Master of Passion (Lingfield 5f hcp).
PAGEBOY: Raced stands' side, kept on one pace final 2l, 6th of 13, 3l behind Natural Key (Hamilton 5f hcp, Gd).
SHASHI: Chased leaders, ridden 2f out, weakened 1f out, 6th of 11, 4l behind Invocation (Lingfield 6f hcp).

● Blinkered for the first time — LINGFIELD: 1.30 Ben's Ridge; 2.00 Incatime.

Results

SOUTHWELL

12.45 (1m): 1, BROUGHTON'S PRIDE, S Buckley (11-8 fav); **2, In Good Faith** (3-1); **3, Supreme Illusion (AUS)** (25-1). 7 ran. 3, 3½. (J Eyre) Tote: £1.90; £1.10, £2.00. Dual F: £5.10. Trio: £49.60. CSF: £5.66. Tricast: £56.64. NR: Kass Alhawa, Mu-Arrik.

1.15 (1m 4f): 1, NISHAMIRA, D McKeown (2-5 fav); **2, Golden Hadeer** (14-1); **3, Hornpipe** (10-1). 8 ran. 2½, 3. (T Barron) Tote: £1.20; £1.10, £1.80, £1.10. Dual F: £9.10. CSF: £8.49.

1.45 (6f): 1, DOMINANT AIR, S Sanders (10-11 Fav); **2, Fiqfla** (11-2); **3, Treasure Touch** (10-1). 7 ran. 1½, 3. (M Prescott) Tote: £2.00; £1.20, £2.10. Dual F: £4.80. CSF: £6.79.

2.15 (1m 3f): 1, CHINA CASTLE, S Drowne (9-2); **2, Albaha** (5-2 fav); **3, Malfun** (20-1). 11 ran. 5, 10. (P Haslam) Tote: £6.60; £2.00, £1.60, £5.30. Dual F: £10.00. Trio: £374.00. CSF: £16.72. Tricast: £184.72. NR: I'm A Dreamer.

2.45 (7f): 1, PLEASURE TRICK, Kim Tinkler (10-1); **2, Plum First** (9-2); **3, Craigie Boy** (8-1). 5-2 fav Desert Invader. 13 ran. 4, ½. (Don Enrico Incisa) Tote: £10.90; £2.80, £2.40, £1.90. Dual F: £39.30. Trio: £117.40. CSF: £51.40. Tricast: £364.77.

3.15 (1m): 1, ASPECTO LAD, J Weaver (11-4); **2, Head Girl** (9-4 fav); **3, Nob Down** (5-1). 10 ran. Nk, hd. (M Johnston) Tote: £3.00; £1.40, £1.60, £1.40. Dual F: £4.70. Trio: £13.90. CSF: £9.35.

3.45 (1m): 1, DOWN THE YARD, R Brisland (5-1); **2, Royal Acclaim** (5-1); **3, Ibtihar** (5-2 fav). 8 ran. 7, ½. (M Chapman) Tote: £4.30; £2.10, £3.70, £1.00. Dual F: £13.20. CSF: £28.38. Tricast: £70.53.

QUADPOT: £16.00.

PLACEPOT: £21.90.

JACKPOT: £10,160.60.

Motor Racing

Ferrari get new muscle from Brawn

Alan Henry

MICHAEL Schumacher has made it clear that he is hoping for a dramatically improved performance from the new 1997 Ferrari, possibly the last such car to be designed by the British engineer John Barnard, which will be unveiled today at the team's Maranello base.

"I expected some problems in the first year but I will not be happy if they are repeated," said Schumacher. "This time we need reliability and performance so we can win more races and mount a serious [world championship] challenge."

Barnard has been responsible for designing Ferrari's grand-prix cars from a base in Surrey since 1993, having previously been with the team in 1986–89. However, his contract expires next July and speculation suggests he will switch to Alain Prost's planned new team if the Frenchman is successful in purchasing Ligier as a basis for his own operation.

However, British design influence at Ferrari is set to continue with the former Benetton engineer Ross Brawn taking over this month as technical director of the team's racing department in Maranello. Brawn previously worked with Schumacher when he won the 1994 and 1995 titles for Benetton and the German is known to hold him in high regard.

Barnard designs the cars and works on future development but, once the cars are completed, Brawn will now oversee their operation at races.

The new Ferrari is a more conventional design than last year's type F310 with which Schumacher won three races, but Barnard describes as "total fiction" rumours that the car will be fitted with a radical full-width central wing in an attempt to find a loophole in the technical regulations. "No such loophole exists to my knowledge," he said. "The rules are intended to prevent this sort of development."

The new Ferrari has a high nose section and the driver sits in a more reclined position within the cockpit, a change intended to help airflow into the engine airbox which was a problem with last year's car.

"I think Williams will still be the team to beat," said Schumacher, "but we will be able to challenge them more closely this time." Schumacher is expected to give the new Ferrari preliminary trials at the team's Fiorano test track this week before undertaking an intensive development programme at the Jerez circuit in Spain later this month in preparation for the first race of the season in Melbourne on March 9.

Barnard . . . Ligier bound?

Ice Hockey

Lyle's roadshow pays dividends

Vic Batchelder

IT was a busy but successful weekend for Cardiff Devils' teenaged netminder Stevie Lyle. He not only travelled from the Transylvanian mountains via the Welsh capital to Newcastle and then back to the Principality but also helped his team establish a two-point lead at the top of Superleague.

Devils, who head Sheffield Steelers, followed Saturday's 6–3 home win against Ayr by defeating the Newcastle Cobras 6–2 — wins in which Lyle played "two huge games", according to the Devils' coach Paul Heavey.

Seventeen last month, the netminder spent last week with the British Under-21 side contesting Pool C of the World Junior Championships in Romania.

After completing Britain's 5–4 defeat by Denmark in the play-off for bronze late on Friday, Lyle left the team's post-tournament dinner and returned to their hotel before boarding a bus at 1am along with the British referees who had been officiating at the championships.

They endured a sleepless, 6½-hour journey through icy conditions to arrive at Bucharest's airport for an early flight to Heathrow. On arrival in London at around noon, Lyle was met by Cardiff officials and driven to the Wales National Ice Rink for the 7pm face-off. Then, after stopping all bar three of Ayr's 35 shots, it was home to bed before boarding another coach for the journey to Newcastle on Sunday.

Lyle — who is playing only because Frank Caprice, the club's first-choice goalie, is injured — was in good form, conceding two goals from 25 shots while his team-mate Steve Thornton hit a hat-trick. The return journey ended in Cardiff at around 5am yesterday.

Lyle, who began the season trying out for a North American minor league team in Detroit, "has really matured this year", according to Heavey. "Ayr's first goal was a sort of lobbed, flicky, horrible kind of shot; maybe last season that would have bothered him but he just shook it off.

"He's come in, done a tremendous job and given the team a lot of confidence. To be honest, we're playing off him and his big saves."

Golf

Norman back in the swing

GREG NORMAN won the Andersen Consulting World Championship of Golf in Scottsdale, Arizona, late on Sunday and then announced he was taking two months off to fine-tune his swing before the Doral Open in Miami on March 6.

The Australian world No. 1, who hung on for a one-hole victory over Scott Hoch at the Grayhawk Club, parted company with his long-time coach Butch Harmon at the end of last year to work with David Leadbetter, Nick Faldo's mentor, and the collaboration worked immediately as Norman sank a 20ft birdie putt at the last hole to edge out the American.

Despite a reputation for cracking under pressure when it is greatest — in the last round of majors, notably last year in the Masters — he has been world No. 1 for 82 weeks, surpassing Faldo's record.

SONY WORLD RANKINGS: 1, G Norman (Aus) 11.88 pts ave; 2, T Lehman (US) 9.58; 3, C Montgomerie (GB) 9.15; 4, E Els (SA) 8.40; 5, F Couples (US) 8.05; 6, P Mickelson (US) 7.86; 7, N Faldo (GB) 7.59; 8, M Ozaki (Jap) 7.58; 9, D Love (US) 7.40; 10, C Pavin (US) 6.82; 11, M O'Meara (US) 6.61; 12, S Stricker (US) 6.19; 13, N Price (Zim) 6.11; 14, S Hoch (US) 5.74; 15, S Elkington (Aus) 5.42; 16, B Langer (Ger) 5.32; 17, T Watson (US) 5.28; 18, M Brooks (US) 5.23; 19, D Duval (US) 5.15; 20, M McNulty (Zim) 5.10.

Tennis

Henman high, Rusedski low

TIM HENMAN arrived in Sydney yesterday to prepare for next week's Australian Open with his world ranking at a career-best No. 24 and his confidence sky-high after taking a set off the former world No. 1 Jim Courier in Sunday's Qatar Open, the first ATP final of his career.

"I am playing better and better," was the usually understated Henman's own estimation as he addressed himself to his next court appointment in the Sydney International tournament at White City, which uses the same Reebok Ace surface as the Flinders Park Open venue.

But the British No. 2 Greg Rusedski, now down to No. 47 in the rankings, had his Melbourne preparations disrupted when he was beaten in the first round of the New Zealand Open in Auckland. The No. 7 seed lost 6–2, 3–6, 6–7 to the German Alex Radulescu, ranked more than 30 places below him.

● The Australian world No. 30 Jason Stoltenberg needs surgery on a wrist tendon and has pulled out of the Open.

Soccer

'Farmer' Toshack to quit Deportivo

JOHN TOSHACK has announced he is to leave Deportivo Coruña at the end of the season. Following his club's weekend 1-0 home defeat by Barcelona he said yesterday: "I will not continue at Deportivo, whatever happens."

Toshack, who was heavily criticised with Barcelona's coach Bobby Robson for the poor level of play on Saturday, is a veteran of the Spanish league after two spells at Real Sociedad and one at Real Madrid. But he has never looked comfortable as coach at Deportivo.

"The supporters have always looked down on my work," said the Welshman, whose defensive instincts have been questioned after a close season in which Deportivo spent heavily to reinforce an already formidable squad.

"Ronaldo, Renaldo, Rivaldo, Figo, Guardiola and Amunike Djukic did not produce a single gram of football," said yesterday's El Pais of Saturday's match. "Seen as an aim of science, that result, doubtless unachievable by the biochemists of the Pasteur Institute, was faithfully achieved by two farmhands from the British Museum," the article continued in criticism of Toshack and Robson.

Ian Ross writes: Manchester City's chances of signing Paul Warhurst from Blackburn on loan receded yesterday when Bolton Wanderers offered £1.5 million for the utility player.

Everton have joined the clubs hoping to sign Nottingham Forest's Alf Inge Haaland. The manager Joe Royle was at the City Ground on Saturday to see the Norwegian midfielder produce an impressive performance in Forest's 3-0 FA Cup victory over Ipswich.

● Ray Wilkins yesterday joined Millwall on a monthly contract. The former QPR manager, who has played for Hibernian for the past four months, links up with his former Manchester United and Rangers team-mate Jimmy Nicholl, now manager at The New Den.

Sunderland will today complete the £250,000 signing of the Swedish international defender Jan Eriksson, subject to a medical. The 29-year-old met the manager Peter Reid before Saturday's FA Cup tie at Arsenal and travelled back to the north-east on the team coach.

West Ham's Portuguese midfielder Hugo Porfirio has been told to carry on playing in the FA Cup. Wrexham questioned his eligibility, believing he was on loan from Sporting Lisbon, after he had scored the equaliser in the 1–1 draw at the Racecourse Ground but an FA spokesman Steve Double said yesterday "Porfirio is eligible to play. There is really no such thing as an international loan player. He is currently under contract to West Ham."

This season on-loan players are ineligible to play in the FA Cup and that ruled the West Ham striker Mike Newell out of the match on Saturday. Wrexham reckoned that Porfirio should be treated in the same way as Newell, who is on loan from Birmingham.

Blackburn's caretaker manager Tony Parkes yesterday admitted that the club are "nowhere near" to arriving at a deal for the Poland international Marek Citko from Lodz. Blackburn hope, however, to take the striker on trial for a few days.

● The BBC will televise Liverpool's FA Cup fourth-round tie at Chelsea live on Sunday, January 26, kick-off 4.10pm. Sky, who screened Charlton v Newcastle on Sunday, will stick with the replay winners, who entertain Nottingham Forest, for their fourth-round game, also on January 26 with a 1.30pm start.

Fight hots up for control of Forest

SOME STARTLING late manoeuvres before the extraordinary general meeting of Nottingham Forest shareholders last night saw the Monte Carlo businessman Lawrie Lewis leap back into the fray.

This time, though, Lewis has thrown his support behind the Sandy Anderson consortium which is attempting to take control of the club. The move is a dramatic about-turn for, until Boxing Day when he pulled out, he was part of the rival consortium which included the former Tottenham chairman Irving Scholar and a local author Phil Soar.

The bid by the Anderson group is the only firm offer on the table. It promises £13 million for players immediately and more later. Lewis has offered it a cash injection of up to £3 million in return for a minority shareholding.

Two other groups are waiting in the wings: the Scholar-Shaw group, which has been joined by Nigel Wray, a property magnate who has a £2.5 million stake in Saracens rugby club; and a consortium headed by a video tycoon, Grant Bovey.

Last night's meeting had the option of voting to accept the Anderson offer or delaying a decision in order to consider the other two bids.

Nigel Doughty, head of one of the venture-capital group Doughty-Hanson, who was responsible for putting together the Anderson consortium, said: "We are clearly delighted by Mr Lewis's endorsement of our consortium.

"He has thought about our offer very carefully and is behaving with great integrity in his attitude towards the club. We are committed to spending £13 million on players and will consider Mr Lewis's offer of more money for this."

Lewis said of Anderson's consortium: "They will make a dynamic professional management team which will drive the club back up to where it belongs. Everything will flow from the club being managed as a thrusting and successful business.

"I have been following very closely the tremendous groundswell of support which has been growing for the consortium. These people are genuine fans and that's something the Forest supporters can recognise."

Anderson, a local millionaire, fired a shot across his rivals' bows, attacking the presentation of their plans to the media. "This has all the appearance of spoiling tactics," he said. "It is no way to treat shareholders. To arrogantly announce the bid through the newspapers and not directly to the people who will vote is both discourteous and unprofessional.

"Shareholders must make a judgment on people who play games like this when the whole future of the club hangs in the balance."

Anderson also hit out at the plan of Scholar, Soar and Wray to float Forest on the Stock Exchange in the next few months if they gain power. "The other group must know that this is not feasible in the short term and the supporters must not be conned in this way.

"We have said in our legally binding document that we shall be seeking a flotation but the reality is that this is not a quick way to raise money. It will take a minimum of two years before Forest is in financial shape to float."

Bovey, meanwhile, was pledging instant money for the caretaker-manager Stuart Pearce to buy the on-loan Nigel Clough from Manchester City.

Bovey, who owns Cruise Holdings Plc, said: "I am quite happy to transfer into Forest's account whatever amount of money is needed to bring Nigel Clough to the club. If we are eventually successful with our bid, the money will be absorbed in the deal. If our offer is not accepted, we will want the cash back after 14 days."

One striker not about to join Forest is Jürgen Klinsmann, who was linked with the club over the weekend. The German, who has been threatening to leave Bayern Munich, has decided to stay put until the end of the season. "I want to win the championship and the German Cup with Bayern. Anything else is secondary," he said.

Pools Forecast

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP				
1	Aston Villa	v	Newcastle	1
2	Blackburn	v	Coventry	1
3	Leeds	v	Leicester	1
4	Liverpool	v	West Ham	1
5	Middlesbro	v	Southampton	1
6	Nottm F	v	Chelsea	x
7	Sheff Wed	v	Everton	2
8	Sunderland	v	Arsenal	x
9	Wimbledon	v	Derby	1
NATIONWIDE LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION				
10	Bradford C	v	Oxford	2
11	Grimsby	v	Port Vale	2
12	Ipswich	v	Sheff Utd	x
13	Man City	v	C Palace	1
14	Oldham	v	Huddersfield	1
15	Portsmouth	v	Bolton	x
16	QPR	v	Barnsley	2
17	Reading	v	Charlton	x
18	Southend	v	Norwich	2
SECOND DIVISION				
19	Blackpool	v	Luton	x
20	Bournemouth	v	Rotherham	1
21	Bristol C	v	Burnley	1
22	Bury	v	Walsall	1
23	Chesterfield	v	Bristol R	x
24	Gillingham	v	Stockport	1
25	Millwall	v	Preston	1
26	Plymouth	v	Crewe	2
27	Watford	v	Shrewsbury	1
28	Wrexham	v	Notts Co	1
29	Wycombe	v	Peterborough	2
30	York	v	Brentford	2
THIRD DIVISION				
31	Barnet	v	Scunthorpe	1
32	Brighton	v	Northampton	2
33	Cambridge	v	Exeter	1
34	Cardiff	v	Lincoln	1
35	Carlisle	v	Torquay	1
36	Chester	v	Hartlepool	1
37	Doncaster	v	Colchester	x
38	Fulham	v	Darlington	1
39	Hereford	v	Mansfield	1
BELL'S SCOTTISH PREMIER				
40	Dunfermline	v	Dundee Utd	2
41	Hearts	v	Celtic	x
42	Kilmarnock	v	Raith Rvrs	1
43	Motherwell	v	Hibernian	2
SCOTTISH LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION				
44	Clydebank	v	St Mirren	2
45	Dundee	v	Airdrie	x
46	Morton	v	East Fife	1
47	Stirling A	v	Falkirk	1
SECOND DIVISION				
48	Berwick	v	Dumbarton	2
49	Brechin	v	Hamilton	2

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

Ipswich off but Stockport on course

THE weather claimed another victim yesterday when today's Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final between Ipswich and Leicester was called off due to ice on the Portman Road pitch. The game will now be played on Tuesday, January 21.

However, today's other quarter-final, between Stockport and Southampton, seems likely to go ahead. Southampton's manager Graeme Souness, so critical of Reading's pitch on Saturday, is in no doubt what to expect this evening. "I have told the players the pitch at Stockport will be worse than at Reading and that was bone hard.

"Reading is now a thing of the past and we have a great chance to get into the semi-finals. If I was the Stockport manager I would be telling my players that Southampton don't fancy this match one little bit. But he is wrong."

● A secret Uefa investigation team, in existence for the last five months, will examine the new allegations of widespread corruption and match-fixing said to be exposed in a French judiciary report into the Tapie/Marseille affair.

Uefa also said yesterday that it was looking into "something" it had learnt about the Belgian side Club Bruges, but the club categorically denied any wrongdoing.

Bruges' secretary-general Jacques Denolf described the reports as "nonsense", adding: "We have nothing to do whatsoever with irregularities regarding our two matches with Marseille."

Bruges lost twice, home and away, to Marseille in the European Cup in the 1992-93 season.

Cork released . . . David Lloyd seems impressed as the England pace bowler swings into action in the nets at Eden Park PHOTOGRAPH: WINSTON BYNORTH

Atherton plays a straight bat

David Hopps in Auckland hears England's captain provide all the right answers to questions about his possible resignation

THE New Zealand Cricket Board has officially dubbed its Test series against England "judgment day" but for Michael Atherton the time to be called to account came about two months earlier than expected.

If Atherton had expected New Zealand to provide instant respite after a troubled tour of Zimbabwe, he was soon to be disappointed. With more than half the winter still to be contested he was ambushed by an ITN film crew at the opening media launch at a city-centre hotel and asked if he was about to resign.

Quite whom he should resign in favour of was not explained but then the prospect of snap elections has always been fun, especially when there are lots of frost and head colds about.

According to ITN's interviewer, no British team had ever received such a humiliation in sporting history as England in Zimbabwe — a charge that, considering our recent record, might not bear too much examination. Why, therefore, did Atherton not immediately "do the honourable thing and resign"?

After a 32-hour transfer from Harare to Auckland and no sleep for two days, England's captain might have been judged to be more in need of a physician than a spin doctor as he dwelt on his response. This being English cricket, he had neither but he rode out the incrimination with self-possession.

"I have been appointed for the whole of the winter series and hope to see it through, hopefully with some success," he said. "As for the pressure, I'm a big boy. I can take it."

There seems to be a serious danger here of over-reaction. True, England were a major embarrassment in the one-day internationals in Zimbabwe as well as in the warm-up game against Mashonaland. True again, they have once more muddled distrustfully through an overseas tour with little comprehension of the culture and the history of the host nation, suffering the negative effect that this must bring upon morale and performance, although that is a matter for the English Cricket Board to address rather than Atherton. And true again, everybody should be heartily fed up with England's cricketing decline.

But England did not lose the Test series in Zimbabwe; they drew it nil-nil. That might not be very satisfying against the weakest Test nation in the world but the contention of Atherton and the coach David Lloyd that, given either better weather or better fortune, they would have emerged as victors cannot seriously be quibbled with. And it is the Tests that really matter.

What we are left with, as the New Zealand Board has indicated, is, indeed, judgment day. Until a league table for Test nations is devised all measurements of recent performances remain unofficial. But the fact is that, leaving aside Zimbabwe, this Test series is a contest to avoid the wooden spoon.

That Lee Germon, New Zealand's captain, challenges such an assertion is a fatuous exercise in self-delusion. "I wouldn't agree that this is for the wooden spoon," he said. "All the Test sides are very evenly matched these days. Everybody can beat everybody." The only difference is that some win more often than others.

One of English sport's greatest failings is that, when it comes to identifying a scapegoat, it is always easier to identify a personality, in this case Atherton, than a system — the structure of the English first-class game.

Suggestions are that the ECB's chief executive Tim Lamb and the chairman Lord MacLaurin were more than willing to shoulder much of the responsibility upon visiting the England dressing-room after their overwhelming defeat in the final one-day international in Harare. Instead of distancing themselves from the players who had performed so poorly, the message was that, if they had failed, it was partly because the system had failed them.

If England's failures in Zimbabwe become the catalyst for a major upheaval in the first-class game, another low point in a decade of overseas failure might yet introduce lasting benefits. The worry now is that Atherton, stung by calls for his resignation, pulls his side together with such vigour that they win 3-0 in New Zealand and provide convenient ammunition for those seeking to preserve the status quo.

This is really becoming too complicated. England were annoyed in Zimbabwe by suggestions that they were engaged in a no-win tour — lose and be pilloried, win and so what? Now they have arrived in New Zealand the feeling is that the game might benefit more in the medium term if they lose than if they win.

New Zealand have just completed a major restructuring programme. They have appointed a new coach in Steve Rixon, formerly with New South Wales, a new team manager in John Graham, who fulfilled a similar role with the All Blacks, established a national cricketing academy and revamped their administration and marketing departments.

In New Zealand's eyes this is the first opportunity to calculate whether their initiatives have been a success and Rixon, after a recent Test victory in Pakistan, has neatly captured the national mood by designating his side "the quiet achievers". That would not play quite as well in his native Australia.

England are limited by the faults of the first-class system and, more pressingly, by their lack of a world-class bowler. They are not a great side but a lack of belief — and perhaps of nous — means that they are still playing considerably below their capabilities. They remain the "diffident underachievers", although it is doubtful whether the tag will ever catch on.

Routed India lose series

SOUTH AFRICA went 2–0 up in the three-Test series against India with a 282-run victory in Cape Town yesterday. India, 52 for three overnight, were looking to their captain Sachin Tendulkar to repeat his first-innings 169 but a combination of pace and spin saw them bowled out for 144 in 66.2 overs.

India have made less than 150 three times in their past four innings and lost the Christmas Test in Durban by 328 runs after scoring 100 and 66. "We just have to practise more on these bouncy tracks," said Tendulkar. "South Africa are one of the top sides in the world, very competitive, very professional and it's good that our young players have seen the tougher side of cricket."

Tendulkar was six not out overnight but in the fourth over of the morning he was caught at mid-on for nine trying to hook a delivery wide of the off-stump from the Man of the Match Brian McMillan.

Four balls later Mohammad Azharuddin — who made 115 in the first innings in a partnership of 222 with Tendulkar to help avoid the follow-on — drove airily at Allan Donald and was caught at slip for two.

That left the tourists on 61 for five. Laxman stayed for 2¼ hours for an undefeated 35 but Doda Ganesh was bowled off a bottom edge by Donald with Paul Adams combining twice with the wicketkeeper Dave Richardson to dismiss Anil Kumble and Venkatesh Prasad, who was Richardson's first stumping in his 33rd Test.

"It's a big help for me to have five bowlers as there is always one fresh who can keep the pressure on," said South Africa's captain Hansie Cronje.

"We have four fast bowlers and, while India have Srinath [out injured] and Prasad — two of the top 10 in the world — they have no one to back them up and keep the pressure on."

Srinath, who has a hairline fracture on the ring finger of his left hand, is expected to be fit for the third Test in Johannesburg starting on January 16.

Little England take series

ENGLAND's Under-19s continued their successful tour of Pakistan by clinching a dramatic victory and taking the series in yesterday's second one-day international in Sialkot.

Pakistan restricted England to 213 for five in 40 overs, David Nash top-scoring with 49, but the tourists won by three runs after dismissing the home team in the final over. The final match is in Karachi on Friday.

Hassan Raza made 90 before falling to Surrey's Alex Tudor and Pakistan's final five wickets went for only 11 runs.

● Pakistan's first team yesterday agreed to a request to cover the cigarette company logos on their bats before today's one-day international with Australia in Hobart.

Results

Soccer

PONTINS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Postponed: Stoke v Birmingham.
AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Postponed: Luton v Swansea; QPR v Southampton; Tottenham v Cardiff.

Tennis

NEW ZEALAND OPEN (Auckland): **Men: First round:** H Gaudy (Arg) bt T Carbonell (Sp) 7-5, 6-2; A Radulescu (Ger) bt G Rusedski (GB) 2-6, 6-3, 7-6; N Kulti (Swe) bt J Stark (US) 6-4, 6-3; T Johansson (Swe) bt T Larkham (Aus) 6-2, 6-1; K Carlsen (Den) bt A Hunt (NZ) 4-6, 6-1, 6-3.
SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL (White City): **Men: First round:** G Ivanisevic (Cro) bt M Goellner (Ger) 6-3, 6-4; S Stolle (Aus) bt D Prinosil (Ger) 6-4, 6-4; B Ulihrach (Cz) bt S Dosedel (Cz) 6-3, 6-7, 6-3; A Costa (Sp) bt L Roux (Fr) 6-4, 6-2; A O'Brien (US) bt G Doyle (Aus) 6-4, 6-4. **Women: First round:** S Pitkowski (Fr) bt N Zvereva (Bela) 6-0, 6-0; R Simpson (Can) bt K Habsudova (Slovak) 6-4, 7-5; S Appelmans (Bel) bt J Kandarr (Ger) 6-0, 6-1; K Po (US) bt J Wiesner (Aut) 6-2, 3-6, 6-4; N Sawamatsu (Japan) bt M Tu (US) 7-5, 6-3; A Frazier (US) bt S Dopfer (Aut) 6-2, 6-3.
TASMANIA WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL (Hobart): **First round:** D Van Roost (Bel) bt L Wild (US) 6-1, 6-2; E Callens (Bel) bt M Saeki (Japan) 7-6, 7-5; R Grande (It) bt E Makarova (Rus) 7-6, 6-1; L Cenkova (Cz) bt B Rittner (Ger) 7-5, 6-3; F Labat (Arg) bt P Schnyder (Switz) 7-6, 7-5; A-G Sidot (Fr) bt P Suarez (Arg) 6-4, 6-2; Shi-Ting Wang (Taiwan) bt A Kremer (Lux) 6-3, 1-6, 6-2.

Basketball

NBA: San Antonio 84, LA Clippers 93; Boston 109, Phoenix 102; New York 97, Milwaukee 92; Sacramento 107, Philadelphia 100; Vancouver 82, LA Lakers 95. **Leading standings: Eastern Conference: Atlantic Division:** 1, Miami (W24, L8, Pct.750, GB0); 2, New York (23-8-.719-1); 3, Washington (16-15-.516-7). **Central Division:** 1, Chicago (28-4-.875-0); 2, Detroit (24-7-.774-3½); 3, Cleveland (21-10-.677-6½). **Western Conference: Midwest Division:** 1, Houston (24-8-.750-0); 2, Utah (23-8-.742-½); 3, Minnesota (14-18-.438-10). **Pacific Division:** 1, LA Lakers (26-9-.735-0); 2, Seattle (23-11-.676-2); 3, Portland (18-15-.545-6½).

Cricket

SECOND TEST: Cape Town: South Africa 529-7 dec and 256-6 dec. India 359 and 144 (Pollock 2-29, Adams 3-45). South Africa won by 282 runs.
SHEFFIELD SHIELD: Adelaide: New South Wales 415 (C Richards 78) and 173-3 (R Davison 67no). South Australia 137 and 308 (D Lehmann 97, B Young 91, M Faull 68; Alley 5-68). New South Wales won by 143 runs. **Perth:** W Australia 495 (M Hussey 147, D Martyn 108) and 121-3 (M Hussey 50). Victoria 332 (R Larkin 104) and 283 (G Vampini 88, D Jones 76). W Australia won by seven wickets.
SUPERSPORT SERIES: Natal 282 and 349-7 dec. Free State 160 and 312-9 (D Jordaan 81, B Dippenaar 93, P Radley 58no). Match drawn. **Port Elizabeth:** Western Province 401-2 dec and 228-6 dec (J Kallis 78, H D Ackerman 102no). Eastern Province 300-9 dec and 331-5 (K Wessels 179, D Callaghan 66). Eastern Province won by five wickets.

American Football

NFL PLAY-OFFS: AFC: New England 28, Pittsburgh 3. **NFC:** Carolina 26, Dallas 17.

Hockey

LOS REYES CENTENNIAL TOURNAMENT (Barcelona): **Men:** Reading 2, El Cid 2; Southgate 8, FC Barcelona 0; Bloemendaal 3, Polo Barcelona 2; Grange 6, Pedralbes 1; Surrey 6, Polo 1897 2. **Final placings:** 1, Grange; 2, Southgate; 3, Reading. **Men U-18s:** Repton Sch 1, Polo Barcelona 0. **Final placings:** 1, Repton Sch; 2, Royal Leopold 3, Polo Barcelona. **Women U-18s:** Irish Ladies 7, Canford Sch 0; Willem de Zwijger 3, Olimpia 0. **Final placings:** 1, Irish Ladies; 2, Willem de Zwijger; 3, Olimpia.

Ice Hockey

SUPERLEAGUE: Bracknell 2, Nottingham 8; Manchester 2, Ayr 1; Newcastle 2, Cardiff 6; Sheffield 3, Basingstoke 4.
PREMIER LEAGUE: Guildford 8, Telford 5; Medway 5, Kingston 7; Peterborough 3, Slough 6; Solihull 1, Swindon 9.
NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE: Blackburn 6, Fife 15; Murrayfield 6, Castlereagh 4; Whitley 17, Dumfries 2.
NHL: Buffalo 5, Phoenix 1; New Jersey 3, St Louis 5; Chicago 5, Detroit 5 (ot).

Motor Sport

DAKAR RALLY: Third stage (Kayes to Nara, 552km): **Leading placings: Motorcycles:** 1, S Peterhansel (Fr) Yamaha 6hr 43min 47sec; 2, J Arcarons (Sp) KTM at 1sec; 3, T Magnaldi (Fr) KTM 3.35; 4, G Jimmink (Neth) KTM 11.48; 5, D Laporte (US) KTM 13.08. **Overall:** 1, Peterhansel 14hr 59min 1sec; 2, Magnaldi 35.09; 3, Arcarons 41.21; 4, Laporte 44.34; 5, H Kinigadner (Aut) 1.01.52.

Alpine Skiing

WORLD CUP (Kranjska Gora): **Men's slalom:** 1, T Sykora (Aut) 1min 41.33sec; 2, S Amiez (Fr) 1.42.29; 3, T Stangassinger (Aut) 1.42.34; 4, M Grosjean (US) 1.42.49; 5, S Vogireiter (Aut) 1.42.50; 6, M Reiter (Aut) 1.42.66; 7, C Mayer (Aut) 1.42.79; 8, A Tomba (It) 1.42.99; 9, P Bourgeat (Fr) 1.43.09; 10, K Kimura (Japan) 1.43.06. **Slalom standings:** 1, Sykora 380; 2, Stangassinger 200; 3, Amiez 178; 4, K A Aamodt (Nor) 147; 5, Sitansen 146; 6, Vogireiter 126; 7, Tomba 112; 8, Kosir 111; 9, Kimura 109; 10, Mayer 108. **Giant slalom:** 1, T Sykora (Aut) 1min 41.93sec; 2, S Amiez (Fr) 1.42.29; 3, T Stangassinger (Aut) 1.42.34. **Overall:** 1, H Knauss (Aut) 461pts; 2, M Von Gruenigen (Switz) 447; 3, Sykora 382; 4, Aamodt 355; 5, L Alphand (Fr) 352; 6, S Locher (Switz) 307; 7, J Strobl (Aut) 292; 8, S Vogireiter (Aut) 281; 9, C Ghedina (It) 279; 10, Mayer 256. **Nations Cup:** 1, Austria 4,759pts; 2, Italy 2,645; 3, Switzerland 2,362; 4, France 2,158; 5, Germany 1,830.

Ski Jumping

WORLD CUP (Bischofshofen, Aut): 1, D Thoma (Ger) 250.40pts; 2, A Malysz (Pol) 243.4; 3, P Peterka (Sloven) 242.8; 4, H Saito (Japan) 233.5; 5, J Ahonen (Fin) 231.2; 6, J Soininen (Fin) 223.8; 7, A Widhoelzl (Aut) 223.7; 8, A Goldberger (Aut) 223.5; 9, M Hoellwarth (Aut) 222.3; 10, R Ljoekelsoey (Nor) 219. **Four-hill tournament podium places:** 1, Peterka 971.5; 2, Goldberger 943.2; 3, Thoma 943.1. **Overall:** 1, Peterka 632pts; 2, Thoma 540; 3, Goldberger 514; 4, K Brenden (Nor) 447; 5, T Okabe (Japan) 441; 6, K Funaki (Japan) 417; 7, Saito 398; 8, A-P Nikkola (Fin) 326; 9, L Ottesen (Nor) 265; 10, Malysz 258.

Fixtures

(7.30 unless stated)

Soccer

ENGLISH COCA-COLA CUP: Quarter-finals: Stockport v Southampton. **Postponed:** Ipswich v Leicester (now playing 7.45, Jan 21).
AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD: Second round: Northern Section: Blackpool v Lincoln; Bury v Mansfield (7.45); Carlisle v Hull (7.45); Scunthorpe v Notts County; Wrexham v Crewe; York v Preston. **Postponed:** Shrewsbury v Wigan (now playing 7.30, Jan 14). **Southern:** Brentford v Barnet (7.45); Cardiff v Exeter; Millwall v Colchester (7.45); Northampton v Luton (7.45); Peterborough v Walsall (7.45); Plymouth v Brighton (7.45); Watford v Torquay (7.45).
NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: Third Division: Chester v Rochdale.
TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP: Second round: Ayr v Clyde; Stenhousemuir v Hamilton. **Postponed:** Cowdenbeath v Dumbarton; Forfar v Alloa (now playing 7.30, Jan 13).
SCOTTISH LEAGUE: First Division: E Fife v Partick. **Third:** E Stirling v Arbroath.
UNIBOND LEAGUE CHALLENGE CUP: Third round: Emley v Spennymoor Utd.
ICIS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Bromley v Dag & Red (7.45).
DR MARTENS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Atherstone v Nuneaton. **Midland Division:** Bedworth Utd v Paget Rngrs.
N-W COUNTIES LEAGUE: First Division: Newcastle Tn v Nantwich Tn; Salford C v St Helens Tn; Vauxhall GM v Trafford.
NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE: Premier Division: Ossett Alb v Hucknall Tn. **Cup: Third-round replay:** Pickering Tn v Hall Rd Rngrs.
SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE: Premier Division: Mangotsfield Utd v Calne Tn. **Les Phillips Cup:** Paulton Rvrs v Bishop Sutton; Tiverton v Torrington.
IRISH LEAGUE COCA-COLA CUP: First-round, first leg: Omagh Tn v Portadown. **Second leg:** Ards v Bangor; Cliftonville v Distillery; Coleraine v Newry; Crusaders v Larne; Glenavon v Ballymena; Glentoran v Carrick; Linfield v Ballyclare.

Rugby Union

TOUR MATCH: Pontypridd v US (7.15, Nat Ground, Cardiff).

Sport in brief

Boxing

George Daly, one of the best British professionals never to win a title, has died at the age of 82, *writes John Rodda*. Daly, a lightweight from Blackfriars in London, was "the last of the mechanics", who outwitted opponents by skill rather than force.

Giovanni Pretorius, an unbeaten South African, is Robin Reid's WBC super-middleweight challenger on the Frank Warren bill headed by Nasim Hamed at the London Arena on February 8.

Hockey

Donald McFarlane scored a hat-trick against the Spanish club Pedralbes in a 6–1 win which brought Grange, the Scottish National League champions, the Los Reyes senior title in in Barcelona yesterday. Reading needed to beat the Spanish Under-21 squad El Cid but could only draw 2–2 and finished third.

Skiing

A brilliant second run lifted Austria's Thomas Sykora to his third World Cup slalom win of the season yesterday in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. Italy's Alberto Tomba finished eighth.

Rugby Union

Michael Prestage reports on the financial state of clubs in Wales as Swansea, in an attempt to save £150,000, join Llanelli in telling eight players to tear up their contracts or leave

Cash crisis rings alarm bells in Wales

SWANSEA's announcement that eight players have been given the choice of tearing up their contracts or leaving the club has underlined the parlous financial state of the game in Wales.

Llanelli, Wales' most famous club side, also announced last month that eight players had to go in an attempt to cut £200,000 from the wage bill and ensure financial viability.

The Welsh Rugby Union has hired the accountants Price Waterhouse to review all First Division club finances and has recently taken delivery of their report. It is expected to make depressing reading if and when the WRU releases it.

There is now a widely held view in the Principality that only three, at best four, sides can realistically continue as fully professional outfits with all their squad on contracts. Cardiff and Pontypridd are identified as two.

Barely a year after the arrival of professionalism the rest must adopt semi-professional status with the majority of players, apart from internationals and big-name recruits, spending the week in employment and picking up a match fee on a Saturday.

At Swansea two of the players told there is no money to fund their contracts have opted to stay. The hooker Euros Evans and wing Warren Leach will receive only appearance money for matches.

The lock Mark Evans, at Swansea for three years, and the Wales A international Adam Palfrey, an arrival from Newport this season, will definitely go and must find new clubs with three months of the season left.

The much-travelled backrow forward Gerald Williams is undecided about his future and negotiations continue with two other, as yet unnamed, players.

The savings Swansea need to find are believed to be around £150,000. None of the players declared surplus was a regular first-team member and their contracts would not have exceeded £10,000.

Byron Mugford, the Swansea secretary, said: "Due to financial consequences we have had to make reductions. We never received the level of funding initially indicated from television, European competition and sponsorshop."

He believes every First Division side in Wales is facing a similar financial dilemma. He says players' greed and the fact the Welsh had to compete for signings with English clubs added to the problem.

Swansea put out three teams and of the 60 players at the club 38 were on contract before the axe fell. Mugford said clubs could endorse professionalism only to the level they can afford.

"There has to be a return to some sort of reality. To stay at the top First Division clubs have to buy players but there is only limited money in Wales," he said.

The former Swansea and Wales player Clive Rowlands believes there have to be amateurs and professionals playing alongside each other.

Rowlands, a former WRU president, said: "Professionalism caught the game in Wales unawares. If we are left with three or four fully professional sides that will be our lot." He added: "If you have a game that is part-time pro, with players collecting their match fee, that will be lovely."

Even Gareth Davies, chief executive at Cardiff, a club whose financial position is one of the most secure, admitted last year was hard and that rugby in Wales was not prepared for professionalism.

"We will make a loss this year from a position last year when we made £350,000. The clubs and WRU have got to get together and sort out the future or there will be anarchy. I think there is the will to do that. There is speculation as to how many clubs will survive at the top level. That is the big challenge now."

The news that rivals are also having financial woes must feel like vindication for Stuart Gallacher, the chairman of Llanelli who was vilified after a deal that would have provided the club with a £1.5 million investor fell through.

"People were quick to say that Llanelli has financial problems," he said. "They have missed the point. Rugby in Wales has financial problems and the WRU has to act."

He hopes the WRU will organise a meaningful fixture list, decide on the format of the European competitions and agree who gets what of the sponsorship and television money.

Gallacher added that First Division sides cannot operate with such anomalies that mean Llanelli do not have an income-generating home game until March and have received the same amount for playing in European competitions as new First Division sides such as Caerphilly that did not take part.

"This has been the most difficult year ever for rugby in Wales," he said. "The game cannot sustain 12 professional clubs. If you look at the population and the income spent, the money is not there."

Palfrey . . . stark choice

Counting the cost – a career on the rocks

WHEN Adam Palfrey was called into the office at Swansea last week the last thing he expected to hear was that his career there was effectively at an end, writes Michael Prestage.

In fact Palfrey was one of eight players given the stark choice between leaving or staying on a match-fee basis. The 25-year-old three-quarter will be training alone this Saturday as he awaits a new club.

He said: "The timing was so that they could give me a month's notice and finish me at the end of January. I had no inkling of what was coming. Swansea is a great club and I have enjoyed playing here but I didn't think this was done particularly well."

The chance to play expansive rugby with one of the few sides in Wales not totally forward-oriented had attracted Palfrey to Swansea. A contract worth less than £10,000 was a minor consideration to the chartered surveyor.

Indeed, as a Welsh A international and former Cambridge blue, he found little to choose in the cash on offer between the All Whites and his former club Newport. In the close season he had toyed with crossing the Severn Bridge to join an English side.

But Palfrey was happy at Swansea and pre-season training went well. The return of Scott Gibbs as a rival for a place in the centre was a blow but the club coaches urged him to think positive and battle it out.

"Everything was hopeful. They said I would have my chance and we were going to operate a rota system," he said. "The decision to let me go has come totally out of the blue. I thought everything was going well."

His battling qualities are not in doubt, having already beaten a shattered knee that threatened his career. While first-team league chances at Swansea were limited to half a dozen games, and he had opted to play on the wing, he was recovering form.

As Palfrey works for a national company, happily he can transfer anywhere his rugby takes him. "I'm open to offers from within Wales but I think the future has to be in England. The sides there are more professional, not just in terms of the money on offer but in the structure in place and the way they have embraced professionalism.

"The Welsh players I have spoken to who have gone to England all tell me it is the best move they have made and that they are all enjoying the standard of play."

He warns that many other players in Wales could soon find themselves in his predicament as First Division clubs find themselves in financial difficulties, with shedding players an obvious move.

But he also believes the Welsh RU is looking to clubs to make some sort of commitment to cost-cutting as part of the review being undertaken for it by Price Waterhouse.

Palfrey said: "The money they will save ending my contract is merely a token. It hardly makes a difference to the total cost they have to save. How long the coaches knew what was on the cards I don't know but it all seemed rushed to me."

Robinson rises to new order at Bath

Robert Armstrong on Brian Ashton's sudden replacement as coach to the premier English club

BATH closed ranks swiftly yesterday after announcing the departure of their coach Brian Ashton, who had been with the club for seven years. Officials declined to explain the reasons for Ashton's resignation but they are understood to involve managerial issues affecting other employees of the club.

The prompt appointment of Andy Robinson as Ashton's successor should be painless, since Robinson's association with Bath, as player and captain, goes back to the mid-1980s. Robinson's first task is to prepare a side for Saturday's important Courage League game against Harlequins at The Stoop, a match which will probably put the losers out of the title race.

Ashton has been linked with a full-time coaching post at Cardiff but the Welsh club are unlikely to part company with their present coach Terry Holmes, the former international who guided them into the European Cup semi-finals at the expense of Bath.

Other Courage League clubs are certain to be interested in a coach who has combined success with innovation throughout the 1990s, but Ashton may have to wait until contracts come up for renewal in the spring before receiving a definite offer.

Ashton's exit after helping Bath win five league titles and five cup finals since 1989 comes as a blow to John Hall, the club's director of rugby. Friction developed because of differences of opinion on playing matters, but both men continued to enjoy the support of the players.

"I am bitterly disappointed," said Ashton yesterday. "I never envisaged anything like this would happen when I left the teaching profession last July. The environment is just not right at Bath. There are lots of problems, though I don't want to be specific.

"Still, I leave with some wonderful memories. It has been a privilege to work with so many talented players. I wish Bath every success for the future and I am sure they will remain a major force continuing to set standards in this country and beyond."

It will be fascinating to see whether Bath, with Robinson as coach, can avoid a repeat of the discontent that has prompted Richard Hill, Gareth Chilcott and now Ashton to leave the Recreation Ground all within the past 18 months. The growing pains of professionalism have put Bath's famed family atmosphere under strain as Hall and the chief executive Ed Goodall have set about redefining the way the club is run.

"It's a great shame that matters could not be resolved," said Hall. "A proposal was put to Brian which we thought would be a working proposal. We're very sad to see him go."

Clearly Bath's record of five defeats in Courage League and European Cup matches did not inspire the mutual trust and confidence which might have resulted in a compromise. Ashton had only a marginal say in the vital areas of team selection and player recruitment, which frequently left him making plans for major fixtures without knowing which players would implement them.

Commercial pressures also led to demands for star players to appear in midweek games to increase the gate revenue, a policy that failed to take account of Ashton's views on player development. A lesser though significant issue was Ashton's annual salary. At around £34,000 it was a good deal smaller than Hall's and about half what the better paid players were receiving. Not surprisingly Ashton had engaged a personal agent.

Still, Hall and Robinson, who were playing contemporaries for a decade, have a good chance of forming a strong working partnership. Neither man is slow to speak his mind which should produce the creative tension that Bath normally thrive on. If Robinson fails to stay the course, it may be time to think about inviting back Jack Rowell.

On the ball but without support . . . Ashton interests several clubs but may have to wait a few months for firm offers

American Football

Dallas dumped by new kids on the block

Mark Tran sees the Panthers unsaddle Cowboy champions

THE Carolina Panthers came up with the biggest play-off upset of all when they snuffed out the Super Bowl champions, the Dallas Cowboys, 26-17 at the weekend.

Formed only two years ago, the phenomenal Panthers showed they are no flukes by mauling the Cowboys at the new Ericsson Stadium in Charlotte. "This is a humungous win for this whole programme," their linebacker Kevin Greene said.

There will be much speculation as to whether the Cowboys were distracted by accusations against Michael Irvin, their loud-mouthed receiver, and Erik Williams, their tackle, of sexual assault.

But the Cowboys have been ripe for the picking all season, plagued by a regular failure to convert their touchdown opportunities. They began the year hesitantly, deprived of Irvin for five games because of drug charges.

They also ended the season without Irvin, who retired with a broken collarbone in the first quarter mumbling "I'm sorry, I'm sorry" to Jerry Jones, the Cowboys owner, who must be wondering at the inability of his coach Barry Switzer to control his rowdy Cowboys. Dallas have lost six players to drug suspensions in 14 months.

Even at full strength the Cowboys would have had trouble coping with the Panthers, who have now won nine games on the trot in North Carolina.

The Panthers lack marquee names but have done a remarkable job of assembling a strong team under the coach Dom Capers, who has made a blitzing defence the basis of his team's success. The Panthers made people sit up when they clinched the Western Division of the National Conference, beating the San Francisco 49ers twice.

"We have a physical, physical team," said Greene. "We can run the ball, we can stop the run and we can pick off passes. This is a good team. You all decide whether you want to respect us or not."

On Sunday the Panthers showed few big-game jitters despite an early interception of Kerry Collins. The defence demonstrated their mettle by holding Dallas to a field goal, setting a pattern for the game.

Collins made amends on the next drive by tossing a one-yard touchdown to a wide open Wesley Walls, fooling the Dallas defence with a fake run play to cap a 68-yard, six-play drive. Collins threw another TD in the first half, a perfect nine-yard pass to Willie Green. That made it 14-3 and put the Panthers on track to dethrone the Cowboys.

Dallas cut the lead to 14-10 at the half when Troy Aikman found Daryl Johnston, who made a twisting catch for a two-yard score. But that was the Cowboys' only TD. The rest of Dallas' points came from the boot of Chris Boniol as the Cowboys failed to get touchdowns on three occasions when they were inside the Carolina five.

The 37-year-old veteran Sam Mills was the star of the Carolina defence, stuffing the running-back Emmitt Smith twice on key plays and bagging an interception in the last two minutes of the game. Aikman was intercepted a third time moments later, setting up John Kasay's fourth field goal.

"The Dallas Cowboys are America's Team, sure," said Lamar Lathon, a Panthers linebacker. "But we're the new kids on the block."

The Panthers join the other new kids on the block, the Jacksonville Jaguars, for the Conference Championships. The Panthers go to Lambeau Field to tackle the Green Bay Packers, while the Jaguars are at the New England Patriots.

● The Green Bay Packers are 5-2 on with Ladbrokes to win the Super Bowl, followed by the Carolina Panthers at 5-1, New England at 9-2 and Jacksonville Jaguars at 16-1.

Kidd faces the Irish boot

IRELAND's coach Murray Kidd has been summoned to a meeting with the IRFU today following Saturday's defeat by Italy, a performance later described as "devoid of any concerted or discernible pattern" by the team's manager Pat Whelan.

The Irish media is rife with speculation that Kidd, a New Zealander, is about to lose the job he started only 15 months ago.

An IRFU statement issued yesterday said: "The purpose of the meeting is to discuss matters relating to the performances and future preparation of the Irish team."

Italy defeated Ireland 37-29 at Lansdowne Road on Saturday. Since the start of the 1995 Five Nations Championship, moreover, the Irish have lost six of seven matches under Kidd, including a 40-25 defeat by Western Samoa.

Kidd, however, expects to be in charge when Ireland, who finished bottom of last season's Five Nations, start this season's with the visit of France in 11 days' time.

"I spoke to Pat [Whelan] on Sunday night and he told me to carry on with the preparations for the match against France," said Kidd. "That is the situation as far as I am concerned."

The New Zealander acknowledged that the string of defeats had caused problems. "There is a lot of pressure, that's the nature of the job," he said. "But, as regards me considering resigning, not in the least. This side has a lot of resilience and we can bounce back."

Mike Brewer, a former All Black who coaches the Blackrock College side in Dublin, may be lined up as a possible replacement; the Ireland A team coach Dave Haslett is another possible candidate.

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Rugby League

Wigan deny Wasps loan deal for Tuigamala

Paul Fitzpatrick

WIGAN denied yesterday that they were prepared to loan out their Western Samoan centre Va'aiga Tuigamala as part of a multi-million pound deal with Wasps, for whom he is currently playing.

Chris Wright, the rugby union club's wealthy benefactor, is apparently keen to secure Tuigamala, who joined Wigan three years ago, for the remainder of the union season and at the weekend it was reported that Wasps were prepared to lend Wigan £2.5 million over three years in return for the player's services for the rest of the term.

Wigan are about £3 million in debt but yesterday their chairman Jack Robinson said: "We have been talking to Wasps on a business project that would be mutually beneficial to both parties but nothing has been finalised and no extension to Tuigamala's contract has been negotiated at this stage.

"As far as we are concerned the four players [Tuigamala, Gary Connolly, Jason Robinson and Henry Paul] we released to play union in the winter will be back with us this weekend." Robinson added that the four may play a part in Wigan's Norweb winter challenge match against St Helens at Knowsley Road on Sunday.

Wigan's board will consider tonight a short-list of replacements for Joe Lydon, their football manager, who resigned on New Year's Eve.

Amateur clubs are being urged by the Rugby Football League and their own governing body to explore all possibilities to clear the backlog of Silk Cut Challenge Cup fixtures. These include possible switches to rugby union grounds, to amateur league grounds with floodlights or possibly to professional clubs with undersoil heating. The second round is due to be played this weekend but there are still seven first-round ties to be settled.

Steve Prescott, St Helens' 23-year-old international full-back, is likely to ask for a transfer if his current contract, which runs until 1999, is not improved. David Howes, the Saints' chief executive, said a transfer request was expected and would be put to the board.

Featherstone Rovers have signed the former Great Britain Under-21 centre Shaun Irwin from Oldham, Leigh have taken the prop Tim Street from Hull and Castleford Tigers have signed the 27-year-old Australian second-row forward Jason Lidden from Canterbury.

Team talk

The independent news and reports service

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

Carson names his retirement date, page 13
Toshack resigns at Coruña, page 14
South African bowlers crush India again, page 14
Wigan and Wasps tussle over Tuigamala, page 15

Sports Guardian

Goodnight Cowboy . . . following drug charges and allegations of sexual assault the Dallas receiver Michael Irvin lies on the ground after breaking a collarbone in the first quarter against the Carolina Panthers. The Super Bowl champions were mauled 26–17 in the biggest upset of the NFL's Divisional play-offs. Report, page 15 PHOTOGRAPH: DOUG MILLS

Wilkinson sworn in as coaches' coach

David Lacey on the former Leeds United manager's new role in making the best of England's most talented soccer players

FOR Howard's end read Howard's way. Four months after the abrupt conclusion to his eight years as manager of Leeds United, Howard Wilkinson was sworn in yesterday as the Football Association's first technical director.

He did not swear on a footballing bible because writing a new testament for the coaching structure of the English game is going to be the 53-year-old Wilkinson's principal task. At the moment he has many ideas and a blank sheet of paper.

However, the immediate effect of his arrival at Lancaster Gate will be to reunite the academic and professional sides of the domestic game. He is to remain chairman of the League Managers' Association.

Charles Hughes, the FA's director of coaching, is due to retire in just over 12 months but in reality his era ended yesterday.

The significance of yesterday's proceedings lay as much in who was there as what was said. Just over three years ago, after Graham Taylor, a disciple of Hughes, had failed to take England to the 1994 World Cup, his guru pulled the rug away by criticising Taylor's frequent team changes. Taylor resigned the following day.

Yesterday the new technical director was flanked by the England coach Glenn Hoddle, who made it clear where the division of responsibility would lie. "Who plays for England and the way we play will be my decision," Hoddle explained, "and I am the only person who will be responsible for results.

"I will be at the cutting edge, as Howard has been for the last 16 years in a result-oriented job. Now he will be responsible for producing a better coaching structure and the production of quality coaches is very important. I would not send my child to a school which did not have qualified teachers."

Wilkinson did his best to scotch early doubts about his appointment which have stemmed from the direct tactics, allegedly from the gospel according to Hughes, which he employed with Sheffield Wednesday and Leeds. "Forget any preconceptions that you may have," he told reporters. "Reserve judgment until you have read the script.

"A lot of assumptions have been made on my behalf about what I think and how I believe the game should be played. Someone told me once, 'Never trust your assumptions because they generally lead you back inside your own head, which may not be a very pleasant place to end your journey.'"

If this sounded like typically unfathomable Wilkinson, he was quick to add: "I think it was Eric who told me that." Wilkinson, of course, was the Leeds manager who sold Cantona to Manchester United, whose manager Alex Ferguson was there yesterday to add his blessing to the appointment along with Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, who has often been at loggerheads with Hughes.

As to what Wilkinson will actually do, Keith Wiseman, the FA chairman, has told him: "Your job is to direct the production of a structure in England that will raise playing standards in our young players to world-class levels." To which Wilkinson's response was: "Is that all?"

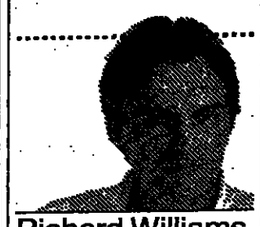
Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, said the job was about co-ordinating youth coaching schemes and integrating them with the professional game.

Wilkinson originally ruled himself out as a prospective technical director when he still thought he had a future at Elland Road. Even after his dismissal last September he was not too sure "but I found myself increasingly watching the game with a different perspective. And the more games I watched the more attractive the prospect became".

Now his ideal would be "to give the best kids the best coaches and the best coaches time to work with them". Before that happens he has to create a structure which coaches the coaches. It will be a longer process, surely, than his initial four-year contract.

Wilkinson . . . many ideas

An honourable captain lashed to the wheel



Richard Williams

WHAT England wants of its cricketers, Michael Atherton told the nation before the start of this winter's tour, is sacrifices. He did not have himself in mind.

When he arrived in Auckland yesterday, Atherton was immediately confronted by the suggestion that he should do "the honourable thing" and stand down. His stubbornness alone, thank goodness, rules out a resignation at this stage but it would in any case be the dishonourable choice. He has committed himself to the tour, and nothing that happens on the pitch should deflect him from his responsibility.

Quite rightly he is having to carry the can for the collective failure, and he is not making a great job of it. By the time he catches the plane home in early March, perhaps Lord MacLaurin, the new chairman of English cricket's governing body, will have offered him the sort of advice on self-presentation that could make his life vastly more pleasant.

If their fortunes change in New Zealand, of course, Atherton and the team will be instant heroes. Commentators will start to speculate with new optimism on England's chances in the summer's Ashes series against an Australian side who are currently losing some of their lustre against West Indies. Improbable as an England turn-around seems, in cricketing terms it is by no means an impossibility.

They begin the tour on Thursday with a fixture full of resonances. A one-day meeting with the New Zealand Academy will awaken memories of the disaster at the start of the Australian tour two years ago, when the term "academy" suddenly leapt to prominence in the English cricket lexicon.

Yet it will also evoke the promise of a brighter future. Whether or not the New Zealand boys turn out to be as formidable as their Australian counterparts, we have already learnt the practical part of that lesson. Our own academy will open later this year, run by MCC at Shenley in Hertfordshire.

As in the case of the Football Association's School of Excellence at Lilleshall, its fruit will take several years to blossom. There will be times during that period when its relevance is called into question. But, if this is a matter of better late than never, it remains a vital step. Like the revamp of the County Championship, it must be carried out now in the firm belief that 10 years of struggle will be worth it if the end-product is an England team capable of living with the world's best.

Atherton, unfortunately, will not be around to captain such a team. Even if he retains the job this summer, consistent international success is probably a cricketing generation away. But perhaps he will be able to participate in a revived domestic championship, which is the key to the whole thing.

It is no good saying that exposure to county cricket does no harm to foreign players. Their habits are already formed by the time they sign a contract in England, making them unlikely to be dragged down by the comatose nature of the competition. But the mentality of our own players, who come into it straight from school or university, is entirely shaped by a championship which may be unmatched in the world of major sport for its lack of real passion among players and supporters.

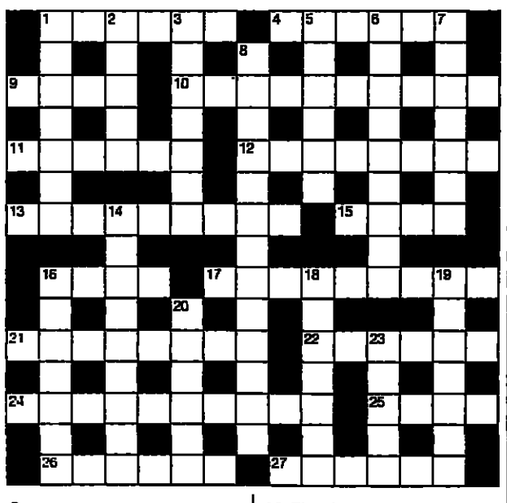
This is not to say that cricketers and cricket lovers do not love cricket. They do, often immoderately. But the qualities for which they love it are, generally speaking, its atmosphere, its tradition, its singular presence in the national life. Nothing to do with the business of winning or losing, with the sharp edge of competition. And the sole reason for that is the moribund nature of the English game's major domestic competition.

WE NEED a county set-up in which as many matches as possible count for something, in which spectators and players look forward to every contest. Some element of promotion and relegation is vital, if not two regional divisions with play-offs and a final.

At the moment the championship is a steady drizzle of lukewarm cricket, and lukewarm cricketers are the result. No wonder Atherton, like certain of his predecessors, finds it all too depressing. If we could give him a championship that retained his interest as well as ours, a more exciting England team would surely follow.

Guardian Crossword No 20,854

Set by Janus



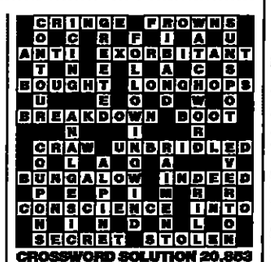
Across

1 Vessel used in warfare (6)
4 Suitable implements? (6)
9 Boat turning up without painter (4)
10 Deviation from miserably bare allotment (10)
11 Comprehend nautical measure (6)
12 Plant in evidence when rain falls on the valley (8)
13 Canopy with unadorned chain pattern (9)
15 The objects of first-class writing (4)
16 Many paintings of a flower (4)
17 Blocked yet didn't retire (7,2)
21 Rough calculation on site perhaps by friend (8)
22 Car-attendants provide it (6)
24 Giant forced aboard salt-water vessel (10)
25 Athlete holding five at bay? (4)
26 Trap set on board ship to catch fish (6)
27 Food to be taken in instalments it is said (6)

Down

1 Unfortunately animal has turned to drink (7)
2 Golf-course rowdy (5)
3 Feeble article on cinema reconstruction (7)
5 Word of honour or plea rejected (6)
6 Resolve to end things (9)
7 Without holding the record they may get publicity (7)
8 Be indecisive about flying holiday? (5,2,3,3)
14 The German campanologist's weapon (9)
16 Leaves in desolate places (7)
18 Take the lead and quietly fall back (7)
19 Simplify the complexities of one French composer (7)
20 Stone fish-snare (6)
23 Hidden store of coin is reported (5)

Solution tomorrow



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Rugby Union feels tremors in Swansea, Bath and Dublin

CRISIS on the field and in the boardroom yesterday led to drastic moves by Swansea, Bath and the Ireland national rugby union side.

Swansea, no longer able to maintain their wage bill, gave eight of their first-team players an ultimatum either to tear up their contracts or to leave. Two of them, the hooker Euros Evans and wing Warren Leach, opted to stay and will receive only appearance money for matches.

Llanelli, Wales' most famous club side, made a similar announcement last month.

Ireland's coach Murray Kidd has been summoned before the IRFU committee today to explain Saturday's 37–29 defeat by Italy, a performance described as "devoid of any discernible pattern" by the manager Pat Whelan.

Bath, meanwhile, have a new coach. The former England flanker Andy Robinson has succeeded Brian Ashton, who yesterday ended a seven-year association with the club by resigning.

He is the fourth key figure to leave Bath in 18 months. Richard Hill resigned as chairman of selectors, the former crowd favourite Gareth Chilcott left his marketing job and the England back-row forward Ben Clarke defected to Richmond.

Bath won 10 major titles during Ashton's career, five Courage League championships and five Pilkington Cup finals, but the professional era has put new pressure on England's foremost club, now third in the First Division.

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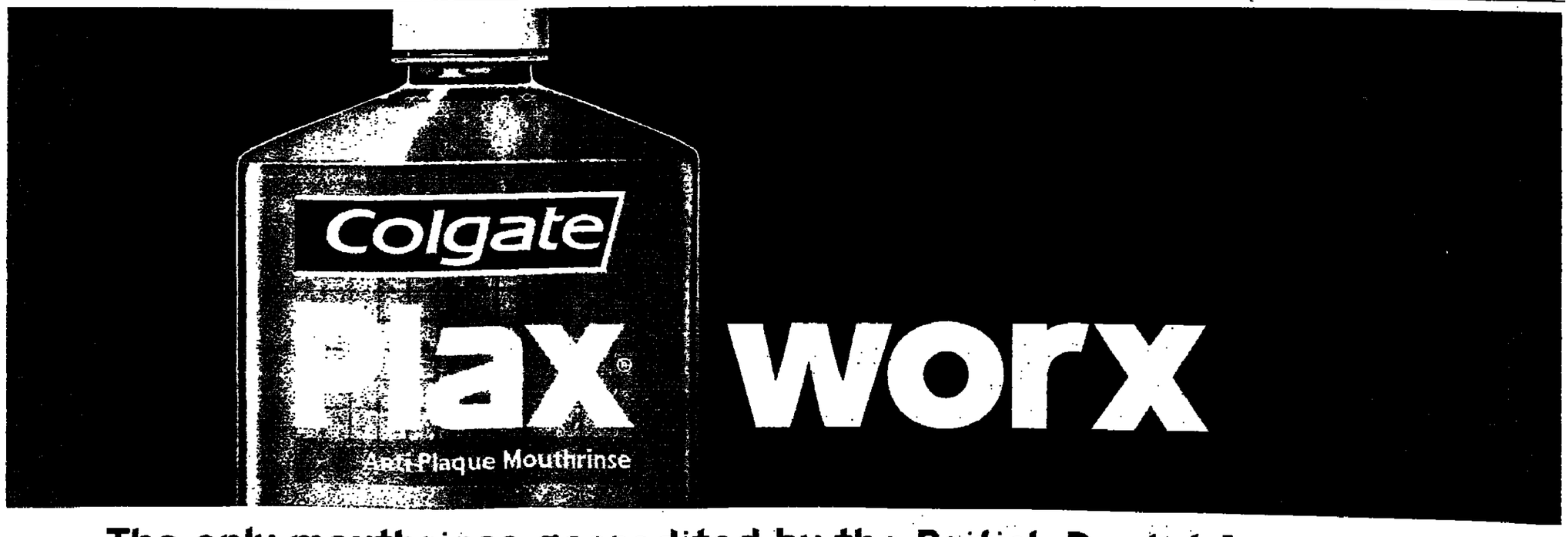

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